

EXPOSITION II

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A Woman of Strength

If you have been reading *Exponent II* since 1981, you have been getting to know Susan Howe, and like all of us here on the staff, you will miss her; you will miss her editorial influence. As editor, she has been a source of inspiration and strength.

Last year, Susan announced that she was going to follow her heart, and her talents, and go back to school to get a PhD in creative writing at the University of Denver. We tried, oh how we tried, to convince her that staying here was what she really wanted to do; all we managed to do, however, was to make an already difficult decision even more difficult and wrenching—not fair, I know. Her leaving has left a void; we relied on her for so many things.

Susan is extremely articulate, in her speech and in her writing. Because she is articulate and because she is so in tune with the women of the Church, she is one of those people who expresses just what you have been thinking about in a way that you wish you could have. She analyzes, she synthesizes, she testifies.

Do you remember her editorial "Our Mothers' Love" (Spring 1984)? She wrote

... I think that we could take a step towards better understanding our Heavenly Mother by praying to recognize Her attributes in the godly women in our lives. I have identified the quality of love that our Heavenly Mother feels for us in the quality of love my mother has offered me.

I sense that we can be inspired to recognize many qualities of our Mother in Heaven in the actions of women we know, and that—praying, fasting, seeking to know more—we can, if we will, come to accept Her identity as well as Her love.

Here she thoughtfully states the need that many Mormon women feel to know their Heavenly Mother and encourages and directs that need with her own spiritual wisdom and power.

And therein lies her strength. Susan is a woman of spiritual power. Her spirituality is the source of her intuitive, articulate, literary powers. It is her understanding of and witness for the gospel and her love for her Heavenly Mother and Father that helped her cope with the deaths of her sister Nancy and her brother Ralph, that guided her as editor of *Exponent II*, that gave her the courage to follow her dreams, and that make her such a strong, true voice for Mormon women.

I used to watch Susan in our staff meetings. If we were discussing an issue that she thought was of particular import to the paper, hence to her sisters, she would listen very carefully and then in her clear, precise, and spiritually powerful way tell us that we should trust ourselves and each other, that we should have faith in our ability to discern, and that we should openly seek divine guidance and support in all that we do. Her approach is a confirming one, and it is her spiritual gift to *Exponent II*, to all of us.

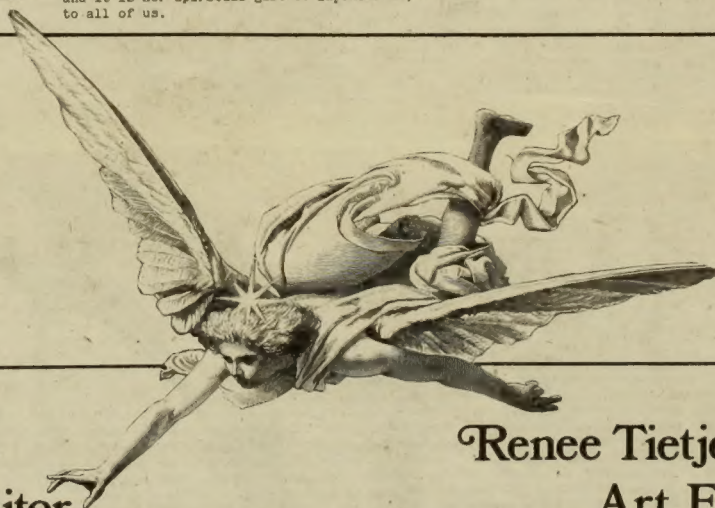
Lest any of us, particularly Susan, think that we won't hear much from her anymore, she will still be playing a very important role in the production of *Exponent II*, from her new home in Denver. As one of five senior editors, she will be in charge of special theme issues. Using her considerable writing abilities, she will select both the fiction and the poetry that we publish. You see, even though we let her move, we didn't let her go.

We don't want to lose her special touch and influence. In her editorial "To Promote Sisterhood" (Winter 1983), she spoke to the sisters of *Exponent II*, thanking them for their blessings. Our thanks to her are borrowed from her own words in that editorial:

Unknowningly, [Susan] gave us a priceless blessing because [she] accepted us, listened to us, loved us, and offered us the support that we needed. . . . Although we may not know exactly how, we are sure that likewise all of us who contribute to this paper—as readers, writers, and staff members—can bring [the same] comfort, strength, and support to each other as we honestly share the joys and sorrows of our lives.

Susan, thank you.

Sue Paxman
Cambridge, Massachusetts



Linda Sillitoe,
Poetry Editor

Renee Tietjen,
Art Editor

This issue of the newspaper seems devoted to goodbye's and thank you's. High on our list of people to thank for years of devoted service to *Exponent II* is Linda Sillitoe.

A fine poet in her own right, Linda has been responsible for selecting the poetry for the newspaper for seven years. When we asked her to be the poetry editor, we hoped that she would upgrade the quality of our poetry section, but we didn't know how seriously she would take that job! Not only did she solicit poetry from excellent poets whom she knew, thereby introducing us to many good writers, but she has also spent hours working with many women on their poems, making suggestions to improve poetic ideas or rhymes in order to make their poems publishable. So she has not only provided a service to the newspaper but to dozens of hopeful poets as well.

Linda also wrote a paper for *Swansons* about Mormon women poets—what they write about, the

quality of their writing, and so forth—based largely on what she learned from her job as *Exponent II* poetry editor. She therefore qualifies as the expert on Mormon women poets.

And incidentally—she has consistently produced high quality poetry in the seven years that she has been the editor of that section, more than exceeding our initial expectations of her.

Because Linda took her job so seriously—and because so many of you out there are budding poets!—the job has become more and more time-consuming. And, like many of us who have worked on the paper for years, Linda's time commitments have shifted to other priorities. We will miss her guiding hand on the poetry file, but, we hope, we won't miss her poetry. Keep sending it in, Linda—we need your voice.

Nancy T. Dredge
Arlington, Massachusetts

Renee Tietjen, our art editor for the last four years, has moved to Washington, D.C. to pursue her career in landscape architecture. While working as art editor, she has not only applied her considerable skills to updating the graphic image of *Exponent II*, but she has also been a dynamic force for modernization of our publishing process.

Although Renee's job as art editor was very time-consuming, she volunteered to help on many other projects. She was primarily responsible for the fund-raising that enabled us to buy two computers so that we could eliminate costs for word processing and computerized mailing labels. She was also a key member of the finance committee that initiated a responsible fiscal policy to improve our long-term future.

Renee is a strong woman and a perfectionist who dedicated much of her time and energy to *Exponent*. She was not always in sync with the majority; however, this did not deter her from expressing her view of what she thought was best for the newspaper. We thank her for her strength and determination and will miss her friendship, dedication, and willingness to help whenever needed. We wish her much success in her new career and in her new social setting.

Roslyn Udall
Belmont, Massachusetts

Sister to Sister

I have always been proud of my sister Algie and have always held her in awe. I was the fourth of four daughters born to Lars and Annie Eggertsen. As I grew up, I so well remember Algie's strong and wonderful presence, her beautiful voice, her practicing her speeches and parts before the mirror in our family bathroom. I remember her clothes, her dates, her giving me some of the chocolates her beaux would buy her, a generosity that was always present. I ached to grow up and be like her.

Difficult years followed. Because of father's illness, Algie had to shoulder a great deal of the responsibility for the home. I used to get so angry with her when she made me do the dusting--thoroughly. I so wanted to be out playing. But, she saw the job that had to be done and did it--whether in politics, in helping people, or just in keeping our home standards as high and fine as they should be and were. We were rewarded by such joys as her elocution recitals. The one that I most remember is "When Angelina Johnson comes swinging down the line." It still rings brilliantly in my memory.

Algie, of course, was an enormous source of inspiration for many of my activities in my growing-up period, and later, after I had left home to make my way in the East, Algie and George were my constant supporters. They awakened me politically and taught me so much about the process of democracy, the understanding and use of which is so essential to my philosophy.

Her gaiety, her singing, her intelligence, her dancing, oh, I so wanted to be like her. And if I am and have been in any way, it is my way of giving thanks for her being part of my life.

Esther Peterson
Washington, D.C.



ALGIE EGGERTSEN BALLIF

1896 ————— 1984

A Tribute to Algie E. Ballif

Algie Eggertsen Ballif, a longtime friend of *Exponent II*, died this past July at her home in Provo. During her long and distinguished career of public service, she served two terms in the state legislature, was named by Eleanor Roosevelt to the Education Committee of President Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women, was director of the Utah Division of Public Welfare from 1967-1969, and was president of the Provo Board of Education for twenty-three years. She organized and directed the women's physical education department at BYU, as well as teaching speech and English there. Among the many honors that she received were the Susa Young Gates Award from the Utah Women's Political Caucus and a Distinguished Woman Award from the University of Utah Women's Resource Center.

Throughout her career, she made a profound impact on those who came in contact with her. We would like to share with the readers of *Exponent II* a few of the impressions and remembrances of some of those people.

Elouise Bell: If there was anything to do with justice, she was there. . . . if there was any meeting of importance going on in Utah County, she would be there. I should say "they," because Algie was ever flanked by her lieutenants, her gracious and thoughtful younger sister Thelma, and her friend of 65 years, the eloquent, brilliant Helen Stark. Were the Democrats bravely trying to make their voices heard in Reagan Country? . . . Was some expert desperately trying to explain to Happy Valley folk the insanity of nuclear proliferation? . . . Was Justice Sandra Day O'Connor speaking at the BYU Forum? Algie would be there, you could count on it. . . . on the front row of life, alert, taking notes, asking, with the greatest of tact and diplomacy, the most outrageous questions--the questions which, however, had to be asked.

And if the meeting had to do with justice for women, well, in that case, Algie would not

only be present, but more than likely one of the moving forces behind the gathering in the first place.

All the years I knew her [the last decade], Algie was blind and partially deaf. Dreadful nuisances, of course, but to her mind not worth wasting the time to talk about. Over eighty, blind, hard of hearing--and she shamed us all, all who were younger, able-bodied, and less than totally involved. Not that she ever reproached any of us when we flagged, when we grew discouraged, when the travesty of Utah's state International Women's Year meeting in 1978 disheartened many. But how dare we speak of lost hopes when she, who had been a suffragist fifty years earlier, was not ready to quit?

. . . the Eggertsens, and in turn, the Ballifs, were brought up to believe that if you had advantages in life--brains, talents, education, means--you therefore *owed* something to the world, especially to the less fortunate members of the human race. It's a tradition that deserves to be passed on.

At the funeral, speaking with a woman I didn't even know except as someone else who loved Algie, I said, "She was the great role model of my life."

"Ah," the other woman replied. "Then you haven't really lost her."

Editorial, Daily Herald, Provo, Utah: When Algie Eggertsen Ballif . . . died . . . Utah lost more than just one of its more accomplished and capable citizens.

Rather, because her interests were both so widespread and intense and because her achievements were so outstanding, it is almost as if Utah has lost a whole platoon of people.

. . . the long list of her responsibilities and accomplishments doesn't entirely convey how

this remarkable woman influenced the lives of others.

That influence was rooted in her respect for individual differences and opposing viewpoints, even when such differences caused her inconvenience or pain. . . .

Now Algie Ballif is gone. But her kind and constructive influence will persist as long as there are those who remember how she insisted on excellence in herself and in others.

Grethe B. Peterson: . . . Algie was our mother, who, with our father in a remarkable marriage, gave us that important security of a strong loving family, a family that expected a lot from each other, but a family you could always count on, especially when you were down.

. . . I was not really aware of her work in the community until I was in high school. During those early years, I was only aware of how central she was to our lives, and that she and Daddy were wonderful to be with.

Her integrity demanded her to speak out for the things she believed in, and this was evident right up to the last months of her good health. [In an interview earlier this year] she said something to the effect that she was not concerned about holding the priesthood. She only wanted to be listened to, to be taken seriously, by those in authority. She often said that which others dared not.

I know that she and Daddy are together now under the care of a loving Father and Mother in Heaven. Algie left us a rich heritage that we are just beginning to understand.

MY LAST SACRAMENT MEETING TALK



We asked Grethe Peterson, one of Algje Ballif's daughters, to talk to Helen C. Stark about her friend Algje, herself, and her feelings about the women of the Church. After what Grethe describes as a wonderful afternoon of inspiring conversation, Helen gave her something for all of us—her last will and testament to Mormon women. It is with joy and celebration that we share this precious gift.

Since we moved back to Salem from Delaware, one of our most rewarding assignments has been to prepare oral histories of older persons in Salem for the LDS Church Curator's Office, and subsequently for a program sponsored by BYU Emeriti for the Lee Library Archives. Often one of the final questions was, "What is the most important lesson life has taught you?" The answer presented opportunity to bear grateful and moving testimony.

Although I have twice been interviewed, once for the Church Archives, and once for the Utah Historical Society, the thrust of the interview has never led me to examine specifically my own spiritual journey. Now, in likely my last home ward appearance and at nearly eighty-two, I feel moved to set down at least some of the significant happenings that have led me to this moment. Not that I have it neatly wrapped up. I feel troubled that I am still on the journey to selfhood.

But to share episodes in my search for my own soul is frightening. It presupposes that there is trust between thee and me. It supposes that you will be gracious enough to walk a little in my shoes, to be open and caring as I tell you of my personal search for meaning.

I had a happy childhood. In our neighborhood in Provo, some large family or other was always having a baby blessed. I was the eldest of nine. We lived just around the corner from the chapel so we were comfortably within its orbit.

College was wonderful. The period of the Twenties was a rewarding one. We were sure that all was right with the world and that unlimited possibilities lay within our reach. BYU was a warm nest. I was active in dramatics and in student affairs as editor of *The Canyon* and as vice-president of the student body. When I was graduated in 1924, I wrote sentimentally in my yearbook: "A part of me, the old halls of the school/the clanging bell, the groove-worn wooden steps,/the many faces, once an unknown sea, and now so full of meaning/that my heart circles around them as the waves circle around the shore."

I went on to Kanab to teach in the high school and fell in love with the natural beauty of southern Utah. I remember once riding horseback in the Kaibab Forest, trying to beat a storm to the lodge. I took off my Stetson hat, let loose my hair, and flew down the pine-needled road, shouting my joy to the wind.

Awareness began to stir somewhat when I transferred to Bingham Canyon High School. Here was an ethnic mix of nationalities. I found them totally endearing. A Greek football star became the lead in one of our school plays, *Strongheart*. It told the story of an Indian athlete who in college sports had to contend with racial prejudice. The entire football team joined the cast. Recently a school reunion was a celebration of our warm relationship. Parents of the students honored their teachers. I felt totally safe among my mining friends.

But up to this point I was basically naive. I realized how opinionated and rigid I was when I

spent a summer at Columbia University. I had enrolled in a course on drama criticism. We attended various Broadway plays and then wrote evaluations. Our small class sat around a semi-circular table where I was the only student not smoking. One day we were reviewing a play that I had deemed highly immoral. I figured that mine would be a minority opinion. To my astonishment, everyone panned the production. From my orthodox LDS viewpoint, anyone who smoked was automatically on the side of the devil. My view of the world was abruptly enlarged.

This period of relative innocence suddenly came to an end with the unexpected death of my mother. In those days there were no known antibiotics that could treat encephalitis, an infection in the brain. When our stake president administered to her, he promised her that she would live to rear her nine unmarried children. We stood around her bed as she rallied from a deep coma to tell us, "Be good children!"

My father, who adored her, was devastated. I picked up her shoes from the shop, sensing that I must somehow step into them. The Great Depression was on. I never was able to keep our family from disintegrating. I clung onto a love affair at this time, trying to assure myself that he was God's gift to me in place of my mother. It was a role that he could not possibly sustain.

One of the poems I wrote then is called "House-cleaning":

School nearly out, my mother used to say,
"Let's all work fast and have the cleaning done
Before she is home this spring. She has
worked hard.
She will be tired."

And so my coming was made festive by the
Shining order of the house. I must
Exclaim at newly painted chairs and polished
Floors and gay rag rugs, the red warp
Brightly new.

And I must see how cunningly the curtains
Had been mended, and the worn place on the
Fireside chair, so that one scarcely noticed.
And I must pause by the green bowl of yellow
Buttercups and watch my mother's eyes shine.
She so loved flowers.

Now this year it is I whose hands must bring
The gracious gift of order to this house.
Clumsily I have tried to darn the drapes.
But windows gleam. Lilies are freshly out.
And somehow I have saved from here and there
Enough to buy the lamp she wanted so.
The house is flushed and eager, open doors.
Expectant, I walk from room to room
Tense and alert. Why does she not come home
To say that it is good?

Some years later, as a Christmas project, we all pooled our individual photographs to put together a little family album for each of us. By my mother's picture I placed this sonnet:

How she loved life who gave life in such
measure:
Greens from her garden; shining row on row
Of prisoned plums and pears, a glass-sealed
treasure.

No money in the bank? Then mend and sew.
Let resolution out the coat or find
The fee that sends us paid again to school.
Tired? Bluebells against a whitewashed
wall are kind.
Sleep gently, she has turned the music
stool.

Now this the ripened grain, the garnered
sheaf.
The harvesting she could not stay to reap
Is gathered here. Turn us leaf by leaf,
Nine sons and daughters. Mother, in the
deep
Everlasting where His spirits dwell,
See us today and find you planted well.

Years later, I worked with a psychologist, who suggested that inside I was still weeping for my mother.

In 1936, when I joined Henry in Delaware, there were not even local missionaries, and no semblance of an LDS branch. Hence, our first friends were DuPont employees and their wives—Lutherans, Catholics, Presbyterians, Quakers, Unitarians—the whole roster. I had been

stretched by the ethnic mix in Bingham Canyon. Now I took to my heart a wide assortment of faiths, finding them worthy and dear.

Slowly we built a small congregation of Mormon members, most of them Western transferees, hoping to further their careers in the "chemical capital of the world." We became a close-knit group, doubling as surrogate relatives—uncles, aunts, cousins—providing each other with a cohesive caring.

It was now Second World War time and the occasion for a strange experience. For some months I had felt impelled to take into our home a foster-child—partly it was to help in the war effort, and partly it was to satisfy my own hunger for a baby. Out of the blue, came a call from a beloved doctor-friend in Utah. A baby was to be born near Christmas, and he thought it should be ours.

Quietly we went about contacting pediatrician, lawyer, transportation. Nothing worked. We hit multiple dead ends, including someone to help care for our five-year olds. On his way to the war, my personal physician told me that because of my congenital heart problem I would never live to raise this child. Once, when I prayed, I seemed to hear my mother say, "Rest, Helen, you have done enough."

Then came the morning when there was a guest in our home-held Relief Society. She had stood up in the train washroom all the way from Mesa, Arizona, so that she could bid her military husband good-bye before he sailed for France.

She came home with me. I confided my problem. She replied, "I don't know why I am in Wilmington. I had never heard of the place. But I feel I am here and will be here long enough to take care of your family while you go to Utah to see for yourself."

Suddenly the problems that couldn't previously be solved, untangled one after another, and I was presently on the train for Utah. As I caught my first glimpse of the Rockies, a deep peace swept over me. This, I thought, is what it means to be in the hands of God.

When this now-grown child came from Okinawa, to be with me before my recent heart surgery, we chanced upon an account of her coming into the family. I was able to return to her a bit of her past. Our family of three adopted children was meant to be.

Our little branch grew and became a ward. My last service was to put together an account of the LDS Church in Delaware. I quote our response to an "overnight" visit to a little pocket of Saints "downstate."

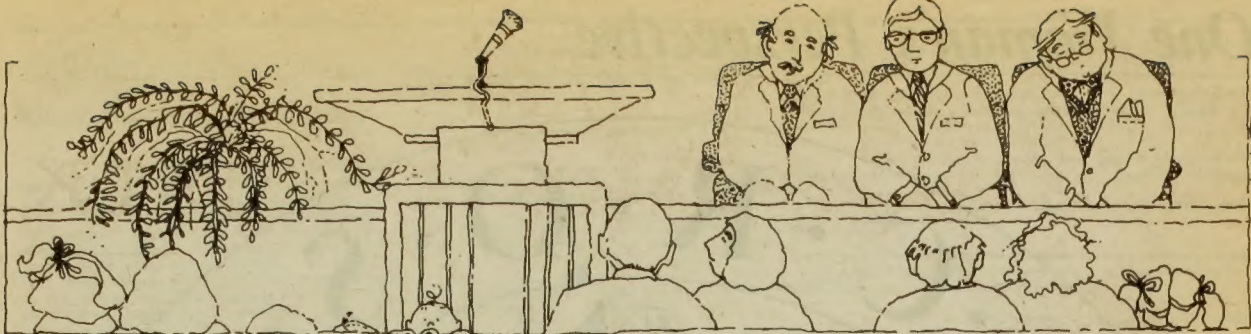
Sunday, June 21, 1953, I should like to tuck away in my calendar of treasures. I was almost sure as I started out with my husband on the long, hot ride to Salisbury, that duty was a stern taskmaster, and that the heat would be oppressive. We did leave, however, with a small prayer that we should be able to carry a blessing with us, "some spiritual gift to the end ye may be established." But as it is so often the case, it was we who carried away the blessing and the gift.

We had known Gladys and Charlie Deputy for a long time. Henry remembers the courting days via motorcycle. I remember some of the many years during which Charlie came occasionally to church but remained silent. Then came that memorable day when we both had children to be baptized. I was sitting next to Gladys when Charlie followed their Susan into the baptismal font. He had planned it thus as a birthday gift for his wife.

Since then it has been a source of testimony for us all to see this family grow. . . . Today we witnessed another milestone in the religious development of a family and an area.

After the meeting we went for lunch to the farm of Brother and Sister Fischer. These dear people, converts from Germany, have waited lonely years for the experience of belonging to a branch. For them, it is a dream come true.

We drove home in the summer dusk, deeply content. Over the fields of ripe grain, fireflies drifted like stars. We had seen the planting of another kind of seed, a seed which



sometime, too, might come to rich harvest. We could say with Paul, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all . . ."

Now it seemed time to leave Delaware. Henry had retired from DuPont, and our children and immediate kin lived in the West. Moreover, five acres and a thousand trees seemed a bit much to handle. When a friend deplored our leaving, I read her this poem:

Homesick

I was conceived
In mountains
By a strong woman and a faithful man
And by the hills.
For surely then a power fused their seeds,
A magic from the fir trees and the rock,
And the blue air.

I was brought up
With mountains.
Some things just are, like food and sleep and care
And like the hills.
They must have fed me and I did not know,
They must have rested me all unaware,
And watched my feet.

I grew to love
The mountains
I learned the miracle of shade and shape
Taught by the hills--
Thousands of patterns made of cliff and canyon,
Thousands of subtleties of light and color,
Winter, summer, fall.

But I have left
The mountains.
How could I know that I'd cry out in dreams
For these my hills?
What is this pain which will not give me peace?
I am no child. Let childish fancies go.
But the blue shadows of the pines are in me,
And the tall air, and the grey rocks, and the
Deep hollows of ferns.

Mother or father
Of the mountains,
Inexorable, inviolate, still,
Whose seed in me is in a barren soil
Without the hills,
With broken feet I walk a level land, clutching
An empty sky.

But there turned out to be more to my need than just nostalgia about the mountains. One previous year had been particularly hard. I had thought that if I could just see the hills again I could regain some equilibrium. As we drove down Logan Canyon toward our Utah vacation, I was unprepared for the sight of that great spring surging with its wealth of water. I wept uncontrollably. It was not only the everlasting hills I longed for; it was the living water. I did not know at the time that water is a feminine symbol.

When the atom bomb fell on Hiroshima, I sensed that nothing would ever be the same again. In the dark night I wrote of trying to find a safe retreat. It would be in Utah. Years before, with a river-running group, I had chanced on Fruita. This would be the safe place. But when we searched on that vacation trip, it was not to be found. It had simply vanished. There was no safe place to hide. Today this area is Capital Reef National Park, and it lies environmentally threatened.

Nevertheless we pulled up stakes and moved to Salem, attracted most of all by the little gem of Sales Pond. Again, water.

Here I often found myself at odds with the prevailing culture. Where I stood in my attitudes may be illustrated by a presentation of a choral reading for five women at a BYU Women's Week, (*Candies on a Wheatcake* was first published in *Exponent II*, Vol. IV, No. 3.) Each woman represented some aspect of the female psyche. There was Rita Jane, the earth mother; LaVern, the lawyer and politician; Barbara, the scientist; and Kimberly, the spinster who made the best of it. Each woman discussed the opportunities, limitations, and rewards of her role. But it was Viny, the questioner, with whom I most identified. She said:

From the dark warmth of Mother I came into her rocking arms and her song. When I asked, she showed me in a book the two tiny parts that fused in the fire of their love. My mother said she cried when I was born. It was the happiest day of her life.

"Before that you lived with God," she told me.

"And who made God?" She wasn't sure.

And did God have a mother?"

"I don't know."

"Why don't you?"

"Some things you will have to find out for yourself." And she sent me out to play.

But I had so many questions. I'd get to thinking sometimes about those galaxies and those stars and about God. How did He get there? What did the Apostle Paul mean when he said the women should be silent in Church? Where did God want us? Did He want me to be quiet? What are we to be like? Like Jesus? But Jesus was God's son, not His daughter. How could I be created in the Image of God, if He was a man and I am a woman?

I realize that I, too, am a questioner. Is that bad or good? I don't know. I do know sometimes that I seem to be going counter to the prevailing mode. Let me mention three areas in which I seem out of "sync."

First, there is what I perceive to be the attitude toward Mother Earth. It appears to me that we take very literally the admonition to dominate the environment. When I had an article published in the October 1972 *Ensign*, it was part of my attempt to speak up for one of our precious resources, the wetlands. I said that stewardship is one of the loveliest words in our language, and I quoted Thoreau's statement:

The laws of the universe are not indifferent, but are forever on the side of the most sensitive. Listen to every zephyr for some reproof, for it is surely there, and he is unfortunate who does not hear it.

As most of you know, such words have not fallen on friendly ears.

The second shock to me was the split in the sisterhood. I love the gospel. It is the very marrow of my bones. All of my life it has been central to my thinking and feeling and doing. I appreciate what it meant to my grandmother, a convert from Switzerland, who learned English by translating her Relief Society minutes from German into English. I know what it meant to my mother who, with nine children, still found time to attend classes at BYU and to work door-to-door, under the umbrella of the Relief Society, for women's right to vote.

Now I saw the sisters turned into two armed camps. Women felt validated in calling opponents "heretic" and were in turn accused of "bigotry." Sisters in this valley even sponsored political newspaper ads, attacking women candidates. Over a quilling frame, sisters relished trashing those on the other side. The test was whether a woman was with *us*, and haloed, or with *them*, and under condemnation. The book of James puts it thus: "The tongue is a fire, so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell. . . . My brethren [or sisters] these things ought not to be." One learned to walk warily between the self-styled saints and the presumed sinners.

And finally, there was the loss of the Relief Society Magazine. From the time of our foremothers, women have had their own publications. They kept in touch with each other, and undertook special projects from the Silk Mission to wheat gathering, and the sponsoring of literary contests. I felt gathered into this sisterhood when my verse twice received first place.

Now, suddenly there was a painful vacuum. No matter how good a face they put on, some of my

friends on the staff were devastated. Women felt demeaned, especially since this deprivation coincided with no bank accounts, and the Relief Society's becoming just a secondary auxiliary.

I should like to conclude these remarks on a note of affirmation: I hope our darkness is creative darkness.

Concerning the degradation of the earth, I have come to believe there is no escape. It must be faced. I loved the little cattail marsh in front of our house. Each load of ugly fill seemed like a rape. I wish we could move, but in today's economic climate that seems an unlikely possibility. And where is that safe place? Ancient prophets have told us that we must look at what we have wrought. The atom bomb and the oil slick are our doing. "We must stay open-eyed in the terrible places." It is sobering to realize that Mary, the mother of Jesus, is often pictured with seven swords in her heart. And she was guiltless. Most of us are part of the aggressive darkness that has produced our plundered planet. What kind of Karma are we working out?

The breach within the sisterhood is beginning to heal. We are discovering more reasons to trust one another than to distrust. Extremes on both ends of the spectrum have softened as we begin to realize how crucial it is to come to terms with our own femininity. This knowing must come from a deep well within ourselves, some inner wisdom that cannot be handed to us by a patriarchy, no matter how silver the platter nor how golden the pedestal. What does it mean to be a woman, wholly and in holiness? This question is crucial to our time.

And last, what has replaced the precious *Relief Society Magazine*? The story of what began to fill that vacuum is a heartening one, but too long to tell. Briefly, in 1972, *Dialogue* decided to publish a woman's issue. The guest editors, bright young women from the Boston area, incredibly found in the Harvard library, the bound volumes of our foremother's *Woman's Exponent*. They were enchanted. Inspired by the success with the now famous "pink" issue of *Dialogue*, they ventured to launch an independent paper for women, *Exponent II*.

This publication fills a growing need. Each issue carries a quote or two from the mother paper. A section called "Sisters Speak" examines such women's issues as the design of chapel restrooms for the benefit of nursing mothers, problems of infertility, women missionaries, and so on. Recently the guest editor was a man, exploring in a cluster of articles the dilemma of the Mormon male.

These women went on to form their own press and to publish a book of essays about our foremothers, *Mormon Sisters*. Recently Mary Bradford, after editing an anniversary number of the women's issue of *Dialogue*, has also edited a book of essays by contemporary LDS sisters, *Mormon Women Speak*. Eugene England, in reviewing this book, observed that most of our best publishing and writing is by women, something that can't be said for any other culture. He claims it is prime evidence of freedom and creativity.

Perhaps the brethren realized that the *Relief Society Magazine*, which had not changed form in many years, needed to break out of its cover. They may not have foreseen that, according to one of the male writers in the men's issue of *Exponent II*, the female writers of today are "intelligent, walk upright, and talk back."

It came home to me, this impact of the new thinking, in a crowded session at a recent Sunstone Symposium. What many persons had come to hear was a paper by Linda Wilcox, a fellow at the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute of Religious History. She was talking about the Heavenly Mother. Then Grethe Petrosen, recently of the Young Women's General Board and wife of the new president of the University of Utah, spoke of what this concept meant to her. It was a moving hour. Sitting together in a group were several of the new breed of young women. They are historians, writers, and innovators.

Cont. on p.13

A.C.R.O.S.S. THE GENERATIONS



I had to pinch myself. I was actually standing in the rose garden at the Roosevelt home in Hyde Park staring at Roosevelt faces--sons, grandchildren, great-grandchildren of FDR and Eleanor, my childhood heroes. As the family and other friends of the family stepped forward to place wreaths before the marble markers at the gravesite, I remembered listening to FDR's fireside chats long ago in Utah. My father, then a blacksmith helper on the railroad, believed that FDR's patrician tones represented the voice of a savior. I became so enamored of that voice that when the radio announced his death, some years later, I went out into the orchard to cry and to write in my diary. FDR seemed like a member of the family, and I connected his policies and programs with the war's end and my own rosy hopes for the future. Eleanor Roosevelt was the better half of the country, the woman who went where no one else dared to go. I did not think of her as strange or funny, the way some of my contemporaries did. She spoke for the oppressed in a quavery voice that I grew to believe was the voice of a saint.

"Everybody here is a Roosevelt but me," I told myself. Indeed it seemed that *everyone* had either Eleanor's prominent mouth or FDR's brilliant smile. These were strong genetic markers that set the Roosevelts apart, marking them as aristocracy. But it was not so much an aristocracy of affluence as an aristocracy of service. Eleanor was the supreme symbol of this--the gawky, unloved orphan of the family who had become, in the words of Harry Truman, "the first lady of the world."

The group in the rose garden moved on to Val-Kill, a few miles away, for the dedication of the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site. Val-Kill had been saved from the wreckers by a local citizens group, friends of ER, and some of her grandchildren who recognized that the simplicity and the unpretentious pattern of Eleanor's life are best represented at Val-Kill--a group of simple stone and wooden buildings that had served as her real home. A cottage, a swimming pool, a barbecue pit, and sleeping rooms for guests provided quiet places to think, to plan, and to entertain. The Val-Kill program, along with the First Day Stamp ceremony, was followed by a convocation at Vassar College where papers, workshops, speeches and dinners bore the theme "The Vision of Eleanor Roosevelt--Past, Present, and Future." These often-moving memorials sounded one note over and over again: Eleanor had never refused the call to public service. Admirers and students gathered at Val-Kill and Vassar were challenged to follow her.

I had been invited by Esther Peterson, a member of the board of Val-Kill and a keynote speaker at the Centennial Banquet at Vassar. Many years before, Esther had adopted Eleanor as mentor and model in her own quest for service. Her experience in labor causes and women's rights led to paths already trod by Eleanor. They had met at the White House receptions and again at Val-Kill, but it was Esther's work as Assistant Secretary of Labor under President Kennedy that brought them together as Chairman and Vice Chairman of the President's Commission on the Status of Women (1961-63). When Esther called to offer the chairmanship in the name of President Kennedy, Eleanor had responded, "This will be the last big thing I

do." Indeed, she died just before the report was published.

Esther's memories of the planning discussions at Val-Kill formed part of her tribute at the banquet. "Whenever I speak on issues that mean so much to me, I feel Mrs. Roosevelt standing at my side." The report on the status of women, as large-minded as Eleanor herself, was shaped around the fireside at Val-Kill where representatives of a bi-partisan commission discussed the rights, the sufferings, and the potential of America's women, a report little-appreciated today. Although Arthur Schlesinger, in his masterful opening address at Vassar, gave it just due, other papers seemed to downplay ER's contribution to women because she had not supported the ERA when it was first proposed. Calling her a "reformer" rather than a "feminist," they showed little conception of her international stature as a champion of women. "The will of a woman is the strongest force in the world," she once said. Do today's young women scholars understand the work that paved the way for them? It is important that women like Esther who knew Eleanor and can describe the milieu in which she worked raise their voices in straightening the record. The habit of interpreting the past according to the standards of the present can be dangerous. The ability to interpret the past in the context of its own time is a talent to be constantly nurtured.

Esther is almost a generation younger than Eleanor, and I am almost a generation younger than Esther. I asked myself, "Does my generation have the strength that Esther's and Eleanor's generations had? And will my generation teach our children to appreciate the doors that they opened for us? Or will the young simply walk through without so much as a prayer of gratitude?"

Eleanor Roosevelt's contribution to women and to the entire cause of human rights is so vast that it defies belief. How could one woman so tirelessly have defended these rights for so long? Part of her motivation was her loyalty to her religious faith, a fact I had only dimly perceived before hearing the testimonies of those who knew her personally. One of these was Pauli Murray, a New Deal civil rights lawyer and black activist, who--after finishing one distinguished career--now wears the collar of an Episcopal priest. On the same program with Esther, she paid tribute to ER's deep faith in Christ that had converted Murray to her late-life mission. She and others on the program emphasized it was important that ER's image be kept bright not simply through tributes--which would have embarrassed her--but through action.

As I listened, I asked myself, "What is the message for Mormon women?" *Exponent II's* reason for being is partly to excavate the contributions of our pioneer foremothers and to light the way for their modern counterparts. This issue celebrates one of these foremothers--Algie Egertsen Ballif--Esther's sister. In her own way, Algie was a symbol worthy of Eleanor. It is fitting that Eleanor and Algie should be honored in the same breath. When I walked into the Eleanor wing of the Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park, my first thought was of Algie. A crystal sculpture dedicated to ER is inscribed thus: "Instead of cursing the dark, she chose to light a candle."

Algie's sight was almost gone when she left us, but after a stroke sought to dim her lively mind, she laughed at the demons of darkness. That laughter, combined with unflinching energy for the causes of Mormon women, kept her active for 88 years and posted her at the center of a group of women who bear some of the most distinguished names in Mormonism. Educated, talented, many of them in their 70s and 80s, they call themselves the Alice Reynolds Women's Forum. They meet to speak, to listen, and to engage in debate, usually at the BYU campus in a room set aside for them and funded by them. (It is revealing that whenever BYU authorities disapprove of their subject matter, they are denied access to their own room.)

In 1980, I was privileged to meet with the Alice Reynolds Forum in my role as editor of *Dialogue*. Nineteen women, two husbands, and two of my children gathered in a circle around Helen Candland Stark. Helen began by showing the group an egg timer, admonishing them to be brief, and stating the purpose, "to provide input that will help Mary Bradford in her awesome task of trying to speak for the sisterhood of the Church in the forthcoming anniversary number of *Dialogue*." She asked that each "speak our small truths" and hoped to end with an "increased concern for the complexity of the problems of women." The short, well-organized speeches that followed filled my throat with tears and opened my mind. The women talked both of their frustrations with the Church and their strong commitment to it. They described disappointed attempts to meet with Church leaders and their sorrow at the excommunication of Sonia Johnson. They spoke of campaigns for public office and local reform movements that they had sponsored. Single women, widowed and divorced women, spoke both of acceptance and loneliness. Married women paid tribute to husbands. All expressed love for the young of the Church and the generation that they hoped would be spared the necessity of fighting old battles all over again.

Of course, Algie was the glowing fireside of the evening. Like her sister Thelma Weight, she described discussions in her parents' home "where we children were never hushed up. We heard things, and we listened and we asked questions. This has never left us." Algie thanked the group for their honesty, for their willingness to share their deepest feelings. She celebrated them for their diversity and went on to praise the "diversity in the human heart." She challenged them to keep "consciousness moving. We are having struggles, and we don't want to give up those struggles. They are very valuable." At that moment I think I understood a little better the source of energy in that room, Algie, Thelma, Helen, and the others were survivors, and they were glad for the strength that struggle brings. For them, struggle represents a glorious opportunity. I felt inadequate in their presence. I asked myself, "Do they also serve who only sit and write?"

But Algie's praise of diversity gave me courage. If I, and others far more eloquent than I, persist in the difficult art of speaking and writing the truth, we may yet light a candle for our daughters--and our sons.

Mary L. Bradford
Arlington, Virginia



Ideas Awaiting Attention

Late, late the night before leaving my Utah home for ten days rest in New Hampshire, I sat bleary-eyed in my study, listening to the clock tick and thinking about what I might write for this column. As I thought about the past ten years of *Exponent II*, thinking how much I wish that I had written, would like to, I let my eyes feed me the images and words that I have tacked up over the years to the corkboard that encircles the room—pictures of whom and what I love best and handwritten notes of ideas that rise up to grab and send me off as a good book might, tempered and touched by possibility.

As I looked around me from one notation to the next, I thought of using one of these ideas for my thesis; any one would do. Being too tired to choose, I sat there at my trusty Olivetti portable, typing them all, copying one scribbled note after another onto the page as I read them from the walls—the scriptures I saved for another time.

Seven days later, sitting at my window in New Hampshire, I returned to that late-night list of ideas and reread them. I know full well that the chances are pretty nil of my ever exploring on paper—even in the next ten years, or in the millennium—what they have meant, mean to me. With that understanding, I offer to you—as the best ideas of my last ten years—the following notes just as they appeared that bleary night, just as they have taken me hither and thither in whatever time that I've had.

- Freedom is allegiance without ambition.
- Oh Lord, help me to feed thy sheep as well as count them.
- Stress is denying yourself what you want most to do.
- Amid all the shame, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. (Desiderata)
- My bifocals function, my dentures fit fine; my hearing aid works, but I do miss my mind. (Anon.)
- Despair is a worse sin than any of the things that provoke it. (C.S. Lewis)
- It is because I love my world that I speak out in criticism of it. (Helen Keller)
- Those only are happy who find themselves fixed on something beyond their own happiness. (John Stuart Mill)
- There is only misfortune in not being loved; there is misery in not loving. (Camus)
- Follow the second star to the right and go till morning to get there. (Kathy Rothfels—about Overlake School, Canterbury)
- In this moment we are heart and bone. For an hour we are incorruptible. (Maxine Kumin)
- Reading poetry in translation is like viewing a tapestry from the back. (Miguel Cervantes)
- Oh the little more and how much it is! And the little less and what worlds away. (Robert Browning)

- My mother loved me with all her heart but not with all her time. (Mary Ellen Chase)
- When we love enough not to be concerned about whether we are loved in return . . . I cannot love all the time the same.
- A good man is one of whom good men speak well and of whom bad men speak ill. (Lowell Bennion)
- The things I steal from sleep are what I am. (Theodore Roethke)
- Far better are those deluded by generous error than those who have nothing generous about them. (Percy Bysshe Shelley, via Clarice Short)
- Either be firm, or don't complain. (Clarice)
- Forgiveness be happy; harbor grievances and be miserable. [?]
- I prefer my strife infinitely to other people's peace. (D.H. Lawrence)
- I would rather be ashes than dust. [?]
- Age does not protect you from love, but love does protect you from age. [?]
- Nothing is hard that has a visible end.
- Pray at night, plan in the morning. (Mother)
- Things work out. (Father)
- Be of love a little more careful than anything. (e.e. cummings)

Happy ten years to come, *Exponent* and its champions!



Emma Lou Thyne
Salt Lake City, Utah

Numbers



This spring the governor of New Hampshire told a faculty group at the state university where I teach that improvement in salaries depended upon improvement in productivity. It wasn't hard to imagine what he meant. In fact, the political science department recently circulated a chart tabulating the achievements of all their faculty members this year. The chart lists each person's name, salary, number of students, number of publications, number of committees served on, number of grants received, and money value of grants received. Not surprisingly, in this election year, the department member whose specialty is political polls came out on top in the number of publications. Some members of the department think that he may have originated the chart.

It is relatively easy to measure productivity in a manufacturing plant, but how does one measure productivity in a university? What is our product? Some people think it is trained workers. Most of our students would probably agree; they are rather baffled by people like my officemate who thinks his job is to build character. They can't understand why they should spend time reading Aristotle because they see no obvious practical application to their future work. Bureaucrats also like the trained worker argument. It is obviously much easier to count the number of engineers graduated from the university each year than the number of "just men."

I don't know anybody who has devised a measure of moral productivity that can be reduced to a percentage or summarized in a mathematical formula. Obviously universities, like other institutions, have to be concerned about the relationship between resources expended and results obtained, but the simple-minded application of business measures to an institution even marginally committed to character development has obvious dangers. A member of the Whittemore School of Business and Economics at the University of New Hampshire at Durham has already suggested that traditional academic institutions are obsolete; in-house training programs, he believes, are much more effective in producing trained workers because such programs can adjust more rapidly to advances in technology and shifts in the market.

The governor's statement has had a sobering effect on me this week as I have been writing my annual faculty report. If counting students and publications is an inadequate measure of productivity, what can I offer in its place? As I thought about this, I realized that despite its commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Church is caught in much the same trap. A few weeks ago I received a letter from a young missionary serving in one of the least "productive" areas of the Church. She wrote,

In a lot of ways I'm really glad I'm in a slow area (three baptisms last month for ninety missionaries). We get to try any approach that we can think of, we work a lot with the members and inactives, and we're basically given as much freedom as we take. But the fact remains that one's peers and leaders tend to judge one's worth



in terms of baptisms. I'm lucky to have a wonderful mission president. In fact he's expressed the same frustration to me that everyone judges him by how many baptisms his mission produces.

The Church, too, has its market experts. Baptisms can be counted. The growing maturity of sisters and elders cannot.

I have also been filling out my end-of-the-year report as an early morning seminary teacher. The printed form calls for number of students enrolled, number of students completing all workbooks, number of students who read the entire Old Testament, number of students who read the assigned portions of the Old Testament, and number of students who mastered all forty scripture passages. A separate form asks for the names of students who qualified for the "ALACAD" (At Least A Chapter A Day) program, and students were asked to compute the number of consecutive days on which they qualified. I realize that reports are necessary, and I recognize the virtue of inculcating the habit of regular scripture reading, but I have been troubled this year at the long-term implications of this approach. Some students read scriptures in the same mechanical way that some Catholics must count rosary beads. They tromp through Leviticus as easily as through Psalms—amassing words without enlarging spiritual awareness, seemingly uninterested in the deeper questions that any serious reading of the Old Testament inevitably raises.

Maybe I am asking too much of fifteen-year-old seminary students or nineteen-year-old missionaries. Certainly there is a place for straightforward, easily defined objectives in the Church as in any educational institution. Unfortunately, ALACADs and zone leaders often grow up to be Mutual presidents and stake presidents with no apparent growth in spirituality. On the superficial level, the Church lends itself to the kind of trained worker mentality that so limits the mission of a university. The objective of the Church as sometimes defined is to produce people who graduate from seminary, go on missions (if they are male), marry in the temple, have children, pay tithing, accept Church callings, see their children graduate from seminary, go on missions, marry in the temple, pay tithing, accept Church callings, and so on.

Assembly-line Mormonism is pretty impressive, but it is hard on those who fall off the conveyor belt at some point. It is also fraught with spiritual danger. Most of the standards by which we determine worthiness measure external conformity rather than internal growth; they define "productivity" in the most narrow terms. It is

clearly much easier to determine how many people did how many endowments in a given month than to evaluate the depth of Christian commitment among temple goers.

Ironically, as I have struggled this year to consider my secular teaching in spiritual terms, the seminary supervisor in my stake has been trying to persuade me to see my Church teaching in secular terms. I am sure that he means well. He wants the volunteer teachers in this stake to take themselves seriously, to demand more of themselves and their students. Yet, like our governor, he is reducing education to a sum. In a recent faculty meeting, he justified giving ABC report cards to seminary students on the grounds that even in the temple we have to take tests to prove what we have learned. It's bad enough to see students scrambling for A's so that they can get into medical school or a job with IBM. I absolutely refuse to encourage that sort of scrambling toward the celestial kingdom.

A serious reading of the scriptures undermines quantitative measures whether applied in or out of the Church. Many of the Pharisees must have been ALACAD, yet they had little understanding of what they had read. Ironically, Jesus's scathing denunciation "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life" (John 5:39) has been used as a proof text for daily scripture reading! The Pharisees had been searching the scriptures but in a legalistic and literal rather than a spiritually sensitive way. Obviously the quantity of their Bible reading was no measure of the quality of their religious lives.

The Pharisees were also devoted missionaries, as Jesus acknowledged when he said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." (Matthew 23:15) Such zeal would probably produce spectacular statistics on most mission monthly reports. It wasn't the quantity of their commitment that concerned Jesus, however, but the quality.

There is no more vivid denunciation of the quantitative fallacy anywhere in the scriptures than in Micah 6:6-8:

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

To do justly? To love mercy? To walk humbly? How shall we fit that sort of measure on an annual report? Micah 6:6-8 was not on our list of scripture mastery passages this year. It should have been.



Laurel T. Ulrich
Durham, New Hampshire



The Interview

"Do you pray?"

He had no business asking that question. I knew he didn't, and he knew he didn't. It wasn't one of the twelve required questions. I had been through an interview with Bishop Jensen before, point by point. I had honestly answered all of the questions. Bishop Jensen and I had talked a long time about things, and he had never asked me about my prayers. Besides, if I chose to answer, I could say "yes." After all, I did bow my head once a week, during the Sacrament. And I did say "amen," even if I didn't close my eyes. That was a type of prayer. I could say I prayed. . . . But I had just told President Clark that I was honest in all of my dealings. I paused with my head bent and meticulously picked some lint from my skirt. With my eyes still down, I answered.

"No, President, I don't"

"I don't understand," he said. "You want to go to the temple but you don't have a personal relationship with the Lord? You don't pray?"

"Well, I used to pray," I said with my foot tapping back and forth. "I used to pray a lot, up until a month ago. But I don't pray anymore."

"Why don't you?"

"It doesn't work," I said.

"Why would you say that? God answers prayers."

"Well, I asked him to save my marriage, and he didn't."

"Linda, you know the Lord doesn't work like that. What could you do to help your marriage?"

"I don't have a marriage," I said. "I'm divorced. But I could still be married if I chose to take care of John financially for the rest of my life, and if I didn't get upset over his girlfriends, and if I smiled. Living with a depressed person is no fun."

"Well, Linda, you know depression and discouragement are the devil's greatest tools," he said.

Thank you very much, I thought. I've lost my family, and on top of everything else I can't even mourn without committing a sin.

"You're probably right."

"What exactly did you pray for?" asked President Clark.

"I prayed for God to touch John's heart, to make him want to change, so that he would love me and love Luke, and want to take care of us." I paused, laughing to myself, and then said, "I remember reading an article in *The Ensign* which told the steps to a happy marriage. One step was to 'say you're sorry and really mean it.' Another was to 'pray specifically for your family and your relationships at least once a day.' The article stated that it was even better if you could pray twice a day. Well, you couldn't count the number of times that I prayed. I prayed, and I prayed, and I prayed. And it was a righteous desire too, a righteous prayer. Families are forever. I had faith, I knew God would make John change."

"The Lord doesn't work like that," President Clark said. "He can't interfere with a person's free agency."

"That's not true," I said. "He can. And he does for people that really matter. He did for Paul, and he did for Alma the Younger. He stepped in on their free agency, and it wasn't because of anything they did. It was because someone else was praying for them. The only thing that tells me is that either John, or Luke, or myself, or the three of us as a family, aren't as important to God as Paul and Alma the Younger were. You see, I knew that God would do it, it was a righteous desire. I had faith. We were married 'forever.'"

"But those men you're talking about were harming a great number of people. They almost destroyed the Church at the time," said President Clark. "Besides, John still has his agency."

"What does that say for the worth of a soul?" I asked. "Never mind, I don't need an answer. I accept it, for whatever reason there was. I

don't know why God wouldn't touch John's heart, but he didn't. Okay, I can accept that.

"So I prayed again. This time for John to leave the valley. And it wouldn't have taken a miracle. He should be excommunicated, President. He was seeing other women--dating--while we were married. He refused to assume financial responsibility for his family. Our marriage counselor could testify to that. For three-and-a-half years I supported that creep while he lied to me almost daily. He would tell me that he had classes, classes that I paid the tuition for, and then he'd go off to mess around with the high school band or visit his girlfriend, and never tell me that he had dropped his classes. This is his eighth year in college and he still has a year-and-a-half left for his bachelor's degree. I finally decided that I wasn't going to support him anymore, so I dropped down to working one day a week at the hospital. I thought I could force John into getting a job, but he didn't give a damn.

"After having nothing to eat but crackers and milk for four days in a row, when I couldn't stand hearing my baby cry anymore, I went down to the hospital and picked up more shifts. Just what John wanted. At our counseling session, when I asked him why he wouldn't get a job, he looked me straight in the eye and said, 'I don't want to.' That is not honoring your priesthood, President Clark, and he should be 'ex-ed.' But no one has bothered to check it out, to question or confront him about it because he has changed apartments every four months.

"The semester that I left him he was on academic probation for the third time. Three of his professors sat him down and told him that if he didn't start to make progress they'd have to let him go. But John's got his 'P.R.' skills down so pat that by the end of the meeting he had a once-a-week dinner appointment at two of the professors' homes. He probably told them that his wife took his beloved son away and he was at his wits' end, conveniently forgetting to mention his understanding girlfriends. It wouldn't have taken a miracle. He could have been expelled or 'ex-ed' or both, and if he had been, I'm sure he would have left the valley. He would have nothing to keep him here. It's so hard for me to handle the hypocrisy I'm forced to deal with daily, having him here. It makes my whole life, my whole understanding of the gospel and the values I've been taught, a farce. John should not get away with what he has done. And it wouldn't take a miracle. It would just take someone in some position of authority to be inspired enough to see through him. Well, God didn't choose to do things that way. Okay. I don't understand it, but I accept it.

"So then I prayed for one last thing. I prayed for a friend. You see, after you've been called a bitch to your face for over three years, more often than you've been called your own name, you begin to think you are one. You begin to feel like a bitch. And when you look in the mirror, that's what you see. I mean, my own husband didn't love me, after all I did for him. When that happens, you look deep inside and you start to think that something is really wrong with you.

"I didn't pray for a lover, or a spouse, or even two dates in a row. I just needed to know that God was aware of me and my needs, and that he loved me and really wanted me to be happy; that this was just some terrible mistake and that he would work things out. I needed to know that I was okay, and that someone, somewhere, could find me attractive and want to spend time with me, of his own free will, not because he had been set up, but just because he thought I would be a person he would take pleasure in being with. I just wanted to go out to eat and talk with someone, or go on a walk, or, or anything. It could have happened. I try to keep myself up. I meet people at school and at work. It's not like I sit home all day eating chocolates and watching soap operas. So I set up a time limit. I asked him for a date by the end of March. That should have been plenty of time. I was friendly to everyone I met and I tried to be happy. But I guess that was just too big of a miracle for God to pull off. He could feed the Israelites manna for forty years--when they didn't even ask for it, but he couldn't find Linda a date.

"So, anyway, I don't pray. I have prayed every prayer. There are no prayers left in me. You see, if I were to set myself up, even one more time, and then be let down again, I don't think I could make it."

Suddenly I felt very silly. My eyes were burning. I held them open wide, looking down, hoping they would dry. How dumb, I thought, who prays for a friend? To have a friend all you have to do is be a friend, right? It seemed to work for other people. What do friends matter anyway? I'd gotten along this far without them. I had my son--he was my friend. I wished I had told President Clark that I did pray. One of the questions they should ask in the interview should be 'are you too honest?' You can get in as much trouble being too honest as you can not being honest enough. Besides, they didn't really expect anyone to be completely honest. If they did they wouldn't have looks on the temple lookers. I noticed I had pulled a hangnail loose and a tiny drop of blood appeared. Disregarding President Clark, I sucked it clean.

"You're bitter and vengeful," he spoke softly. "'Vengeance is mine saith the Lord.' I can't let you go to the temple in this spirit."

"Yes, I'm bitter. But it's natural to be bitter, and Bishop Jensen said that going to the temple would help. He said it would be good for me to be in the presence of the Lord's spirit."

"I don't agree," said Clark. "I think it would just be a bad experience for you at this time. Look, Linda, my wife and I had three lovely, healthy boys and then we had a baby with Down's Syndrome. Do you think I was bitter?" He paused.

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Of course you were bitter, I thought. Any normal, healthy parent who had a handicapped baby would feel bitter that their child would never enjoy the experiences this life has to offer. Either you were bitter or you were an emotional cripple.

"No, I wasn't bitter," he said. "I accepted what the Lord gave me. The Lord will never give you more than you can handle."

Well that does it, I thought. I can see someone being bitter about having a baby with Down's Syndrome and then working through his feelings and overcoming it, and President Clark could have been like that, but then why wouldn't he say that's how it happened? And if it did happen that way, he would be more understanding toward me. Christ was sympathetic toward the adulterous woman, but this man couldn't be sympathetic toward me. And I hadn't broken any commandments. And besides, that scripture simply isn't true. God does give people more than they can handle, all the time. Just look at all the alcoholics and people in the mental hospitals: They certainly have more than they can handle. This guy is sick, I told myself.

"That's what you have to do, Linda," he said. "You have to pray for a forgiving heart."

"The only person I have to forgive is John. And I can't do that, not yet."

He doesn't understand, I thought. If I were to forgive John, that means I would be saying that it didn't matter, and it does matter. Or I'd be saying it was okay, and it's not okay. Or I'd be condoning John's actions and denying all the values I have been taught. No, families aren't important. You can neglect them, and abuse them, and be immoral (but still in good standing). That's okay, it doesn't hurt me, you can even do it to me again if you like.

"Well, Linda," President Clark said slowly. "The temple is a very special place. It's for special people."

I know that, I thought with a sense of panic tightening my throat. Of course it's special, that's why I want to go there. I'm a special person too. They told me in Primary that I was God's favorite person.

"I just don't think you're ready to go," Clark said. "You have some serious problems to overcome first. Divorce is very serious. Do you realize you've given up the right to an eternal family?" he asked.

Well, you pompous old fool, I thought. I'm bad because I got out of a relationship that was destroying me. I'm bad because I got hurt by it. And now you're telling me that it doesn't matter that I carried Luke for nine months and that I gave birth to him, and that I was the only



Poetry

At a Writer's Workshop for Women

One had written a producible play at sixteen then her mother died
 She had a nervous breakdown and became an alcoholic
 She's thirty-two.
 Another wanted to write a story about meeting her boyfriend's other lover who looked like her ex-husband's mistress who looked like herself, younger
 She wanted to title it "Sister, Sister" and we told her --write it, write it-- but she said it hurt too much and stopped coming.
 Then there was me the youngest of the group writing about my mother and I growing a garden in our backyard
 Single now, my mother said we were moving, so we planted zinnias, marigolds, and petunias and placed two young dogwoods at the side of the house to enjoy the yard as we'd always wanted to during our last summer home.
 One evening after the class I walked the street alone to the library where I used to sit with other children, listening to the reading hour on Tuesday mornings
 Wet petals damed the sidewalk gutter
 The library was closed
 I leaned against its darkened alcove entrance and cried because that woman got broken by life at sixteen because the garden, growing tentatively, with young, green shoots, was the only thriving thing between my mother and me and because that woman never wrote her story about sister, sister
 It hurts too much.

Danielle Beazer
 St. George, Utah

Substance of Things Unseen

To make room for three wagon loads of saplings, my great grandmother, untired, sixteen, walked across the plains.

When time came to rest she searched for the nearest stream, a muddy river or a stagnant pool to carry brimming pails for thirsty roots as any woman drawing water from a well.

When dust filtered through her eyelashes, and dry winds scraped her cheeks, she tended carefully the covering of rags to keep the young trees moist.

Ascending, descending western mountains she finally reached the place for planting.

As summers waned and autumns wasted, saplings grew.
 She thirsted with the parched leaf, prayed away all pestilence.
 When winter came, she waited out the storms.
 In springtime, she listened for rain and watched for buds.

On the other end of generations I sit in the shade of heavy branches, feel her presence in multitudes of leaves.

Helen Mar Cook
 Ogden, Utah

Portrait in Parchment

"... and as thy days go, so shall thy strength be." Deut. 33:25

She sits alone in the quiet evening, a piece of folded parchment remembering:

To barren, wasted land from willowed valleys, places of flowers; from Southern breeze to sagebrush-laden winds; from magnolia scent to a metal dipper clicking on a pail.

"She'll never make it," they had said--
 "those cinnamon-colored eyes, pink-shell hands and delicate fingers longing for gloves.
 Listen to vanity rustle her petticoats."

Words from her Bible strengthened her, secure as the iron gates of her childhood home. She spiked her days with duty, placed earthenware on her table, forgetting porcelain of earlier ways.

She sits alone in the quiet evening, a manuscript, haunted by fragrance, many wintered and summered, of saved bouquets.

Helen Mar Cook
 Ogden, Utah

Depression

The darkest places and
 The whitest places
 Are the same.

Awakened by an anger
 Or a hope,
 I return to them every day.

Fine-tuned by their stiff salute.
 Then bending to their persuasion,
 My protection stretched,
 I weep.

Longings numbed,
 Legs trembling,
 I wander toward the door
 Yet do not move.

Glancing at the corner,
 I see the dust.
 Then, while awkward sounds
 Of cheer ring in the distance,
 I start . . .

Ellen Gumucio
 Placenta, California

Spirit Gathers Your Fetal Slumber

Hunger honed on the hope of years
 scatters your image
 through the elderberry
 burning blue against the pale sky,

fragrant and flowering,
 now as then, among sage and cedar,
 juniper and sugarpine,
 as if it alone drank summer sun.

Beyond the creekbottom
 set in the side of the hill,
 where sage nudges dry against my steps
 and snaps at the stillness,

I find your name, Elaine,
 windthreshed against the stone,
 date of birth and death,
 now tangled into nothingness.

Heart-flutter of a child,
 reed bones lulled to my pulse,
 swelling my yielding flesh, then,
 breathing your coil of silence,

you hollowed your downy roundness
 to another bed. No, not yours--
 this hot, dry spot, iron fence
 squaring off a coverlet of earth.

Slipping the husk of gravity,
 spirit gathered your fetal slumber
 to itself, until He who made you, grieving
 at my sorrow, shows me where He keeps you now.

Ruth Bowen Thornton
 Fresno, California

Ann Jordan, Mormon Pioneer, Polygamous Wife

My days fall one upon the other, like drops in a pool.
 Loneliness ripples out of it all.
 I am a willow stripped of its leaves
 for my husband travels east to the States
 to teach the Gospel of Living Light to those who will listen.
 Even when he is at home, my nights turn cold
 for I am the first, the oldest.
 I must carry myself strong before the other wives,
 but I too, long for his presence, and
 I am barren, another Sara aching for a son.

Only last night, twenty minutes to twelve,
 Diane delivered a daughter, all things comfortable.
 The young mothers cannot understand my emptiness.
 Their little ones come often and easy.

I try hard to give up coffee that I may be more perfect,
 but some days when I grow weary with the loom,
 and the wind keens through the trees,
 I hear the cries of the little babes.
 I return to my lonely rooms taking solace,
 then wonder at my own weakness.

Sometimes I borrow one of his sons.
 We sit by the firelight and talk of his papa.
 I tell him of the young man I knew
 though not of the love, the touching,
 memories hidden in years that belong to me.

I should be old enough to be wiser
 knowing the blessings in the principle
 but I still finger the locket he gave me on our wedding day,
 kiss his picture, stroke the look of hair,
 then turn my face to the east, knowing duty is the
 mother of my hours and I must be strong.

We will thresh our wheat tomorrow.
 I shall turn one yoke of oxen for tithing soon
 and I will be strong.

Helen Mar Cook
 Ogden, Utah

Sisters Speak



Frankly, I thought that I knew which subjects were controversial in our Mormon society--ones that might draw letters that expressed strong feelings from our readers. Well, I underestimated the topic of Mother's Day. I had some notion that there were divergent views out there, but I did not anticipate the level of emotion expressed in answers to our question: "How do you feel about Mother's Day? If you could choose the perfect Mother's Day for you, what would it be like?" Because of the large volume of letters, we shortened many and had to omit several. What follows is a sampling of the heartfelt reactions that we received from you, our readers.

Lynda Avery of Boise, Idaho, lays out some basic complaints about the way this day is celebrated. She writes:

Many times I have been tempted to respond to the subject offered for "Sisters Speak," but this time you really hit on the subject that would cause me to mount my soapbox and speak out! How do I feel about Mother's Day? For years I dreaded its coming and hated its arrival. I felt sure that I was the only mother who felt that way. Weren't all good mothers supposed to smile and accept the tributes and feel a little smug about the marvelous job that we were doing? The other women that I knew seemed to enjoy the day. Why didn't I?

Sunday morning dawns and with it the Sunday School Mother's Day program. Before the first talk is over, mothers have suddenly become saints, angels! Why, we should be walking two feet above the ground according to the definition given by the speakers. At that point in the program, I begin to feel the urge to crawl under the bench and hide! The description of motherhood being given from the pulpit certainly does not fit me. I don't have infinite patience; I have even yelled at my children. I haven't taught my children everything that they need to know to enter the celestial kingdom, and furthermore, I probably never will. (Don't they have some responsibility in that area?) I haven't fed them whole wheat bread all their lives and have even resorted to buying bread at the store.

As the speakers go on, my list of failures gets longer and longer, and I begin to feel hope ebbing. I'll never be that kind of mother! Maybe I should never have had children. Finally, the speeches are over, and all the mothers are asked to stand and accept a flower, or worse--a little booklet on motherhood so that we can go home and read the rest of the list of things that we aren't doing right.

I feel ridiculous. Am I any more entitled to a gift than the woman who has never borne a child? Am I more spiritual, more intelligent, more talented, just because I have given birth to three children and she has given birth to none? And so, because of my feelings of inadequacy and injustice, I spend the day being cranky, impatient, and near tears.

This went on for years until I finally gave vent to my feelings and informed my husband that I hated Mother's Day. He was more than a little surprised. And then things changed. If I don't want to go to Sunday School on Mother's Day, I am not required to go and no one in the family even suggests that I go. It is marvelous. I can sleep in, lie in bed and read, take a long, quiet bath: whatever I want to do, and no one questions it. The rest of the day is spent quietly with no fuss, and I love it. My husband and children still remember me with a card or gift, but I am not made to feel that I am anything other than what I am--a woman who is trying to be the best she can, making mistakes and having some successes along the way.

It is amazing how many other women expressed the same feelings to me. I don't want to take away anything from the woman who really enjoys the Mother's Day program. I am sure there are some out there who do. But I reserve the right to enjoy the day by staying home.

Peggy Sargent of Aurora, Colorado, and Claudia Harris of Deatur, Georgia, echo Lynda's strong sentiment. Peggy writes:

"The worst day of the year!"

Someone always looks shocked when I say it, but it's true. Mother's Day is the one day that I can do without.

Motherhood is the most wonderful but most frustrating job ever created. Nothing can replace a sticky hug and kiss, a warm bundle snuggled close, your child performing, or any of a myriad of other motherly joys. But Mother's Day is asking too much of even the most selfless mother.

There are five major reasons for my reaction to this day of "honor." First are the gifts, those you get and those you buy: toasters, fry pans, washing machines, and so forth. These are the tools of our trade, not gifts of appreciation. When my children were younger, I gave them a limit and wrote out the check so that I could receive jewelry, perfume, or scarves. On occasion someone really thinks about a gift, and you get a fishing pole or a bike or a book of favorite poems. My other frustration about gifts is in the giving. What can I buy to thank the person that I owe my life to?

Number two on my list of complaints about Mother's Day are the programs. Assigned topics like "My Favorite Memory of My Mom" or "Great Mothers of the Past" have the speakers portray a perfect, awesome creature who never thinks of herself, speaks in melodious tones, and goes to her grave shortly after dusting her home one last time. It seems to me that these programs are trying to make up for all the inequities and inattention of the rest of the year.

Third are the gifts given out at church--plants (mine always die) or booklets of stories about perfect moms that send me into serious depression. The day is topped off with prizes for mothers with dubious distinctions such as being young or living a long time or having a lot of children or having married the man who became bishop.

The next item on my list--food. We have two opposite but equally frustrating ways of dealing with food on Mother's Day: Everyone comes over, or we eat out. Now with that choice how can we go wrong? Easy. I come from a large family. All of us liked to go to Mom's to honor her and coincidentally to be fed. Mom cooked gladly, and sometimes we other moms would bring a dish. But all of this takes work, and then there's the mess to clean up. The alternative--eating out--is a funny way to honor the person who clips coupons, scans the specials, figures price per ounce for comparison, and who can't really enjoy a meal for which the total cost can be more than her week's food budget.

The last gripe is the hardest for me: being required to smile humbly while entering the kitchen that was the sight of the creation of my breakfast in bed and looks like "The Day After"; while listening to the Relief Society chorus sitting on the stand far away from their honoring families; while opening gifts lovingly made but hard to identify; while entertaining the family through Dad's nap; while listening to the recitation of the qualities of the perfect mom--none of which I remember using in the near past.

Mother's Day--don't bother. Motherhood is its own reward. If you want to honor me, just notice me, love me, and share my life.

Claudia Harris adds:



I am not alone in my criticism of Mother's Day and Mother's Day programs. Once I was able to admit to friends that this was not my favorite church meeting, I discovered almost universal agreement among the women that I sampled. Even the words *Mother's Day* have the power to elicit groans, as evidenced at a recent women's conference that I attended. These same women expressed their fervent desires to fulfill the role of mother well; it was only the characterizations of the role that were problematic for them.

Women often express despair and frustration when comparing themselves to the female models presented on Mother's Day as well as at other church meetings. I remember one particular experience vividly. Coming out of Relief Society after hearing the mother education lesson "Teaching Appreciation," I noticed our bishop's wife, the mother of six children, standing alone in the foyer. With a few minutes to spare before Sunday School, I went up to her and said the customary, "Hello, how are you today?" She looked at me, tears welling suddenly in her eyes, and said, "I'm so depressed I feel like going home. I don't do any of those things with my children." Luckily, I knew her well and stood for ten minutes bombarding her with specific examples of how she taught her children appreciation. She had not been able to glean from the lesson ideas that she might try because she felt overwhelmed and the lesson served to reinforce a sense of failure as

a mother rather than the writer's and teacher's clear intention to do exactly the opposite.

In church we speak so often in terms of the ideal that we sometimes lose sight of what is real. That morning this mother did not need to hear about one more thing that she should do, but she did need to know that many of the things she was already doing were benefiting her children. For example, she needed to know that her love of music and efforts to practice the violin against almost impossible odds were teaching her children to value music. She needed to know that even her most basic efforts to clean and keep order were teaching her children to respect their possessions.

But as Francine Bennion points out, "Even a lesson intended to help women be better can make them feel worse or one intended to help them feel protected can make them feel attacked, especially if a woman finds her own challenges too different from what the speaker assumes. For many reasons, those who write these lessons usually hear little feedback. Thus, they know much about what they intended to say but little about what their listeners actually heard."

What my bishop's wife actually heard was that she was not a good mother because she was not doing the specific things outlined in the lesson. In our efforts to be perfect now, we often interpret any suggestion for change or improvement as an indictment, and we are encouraged in that thinking by lessons and talks that emphasize the ideal sought for and de-emphasize the real difficulties in achieving that ideal in an earthly existence.

I am convinced that Mother's Day programs are designed to do what I did for my bishop's wife. They are designed to bombard us with examples of the good we do as mothers. They are designed to make us feel better about ourselves and more able to tackle the challenges before us. And if, as I suspect, they have the opposite effect for the majority of women present, what is there about their content, presentation, and reception that brings about this wrong effect?

The nature of the problem became clearer to me when I listened to the Father's Day program given in my ward this year. Every reference to the ideal, archetypal father that men should be striving to become used Heavenly Father as the model, not only an ideal role model but a divine one as well. No one listening could conclude that any earthly father should have already achieved this goal. To be striving toward the ideal was what was expected as well as what was desirable.

I asked myself where the female divine model in the Church is. If Heavenly Mother is mentioned at all, She is an illusive figure. Instead, we ask earthly women to play that divine role: either those strong women from the early years of the Church or those women in our own families that time has deified or those women in our own wards that we have set apart for the unwanted responsibility. We stereotype them, creating larger than life roles for them. These women then become merely illustrations against which we measure ourselves unfavorably rather than women whose human examples could help us define ourselves as women.

And it is these larger than life illustrations that Mother's Day programs bolster, for most programs consist of one story topping another celebrating idealized maternal heroism. These stories are so far removed from the real day-to-day heroism that there is no relationship between what is being celebrated and the rewarding but frustrating, tiring, and often boring job of mother. This great disparity between what is being proclaimed and what is being lived only reinforces for women the ways that they do not achieve the ideal.

What we need instead is a more clearly defined divine role model, an ideal that we can strive for rather than one that we should already have achieved.

Also, we need to stop trivializing the vital role of mother in these programs. As sentimental tears are shed over a mother's noble sacrifices, the role is deprived of vitality. Much of what a mother must do is drudgery. Yet, countless women fulfill the role gladly, out of love and a sense of larger purpose, not nobility. When a mother is placed on a pedestal, she is effectively removed from her vital role in the family.

In addition, some of these programs as well as many of the Relief Society lessons foster a competitive spirit among the women rather than one of cooperation and sisterhood. If we honor the women with the most children, should we not also honor the woman who has tried hardest to become a mother or the unsung unmarried sister who has mothered in many unrecognized ways.

These programs often create great pain for the childless and the unmarried whose seeming failure is emphasized when they are denied a flower. The programs reinforce the idea that there is only one ideal female role in the Church, allowing no recognition of the actual diversity.

So, what can be done about Mother's Day programs so that the intentions of this celebration can be fulfilled rather than subverted?

1. Do away with packaged programs. Wards in the Church are diverse enough that local leaders should decide what can best meet the needs of their particular congregations.

2. Include several women on the program planning committees. If this program is really for women, then they should have a say in what type of celebration will be most beneficial.

3. Allow for sufficient diversity. My eighty-eight-year-old mother-in-law enjoys being honored as the oldest mother. Her needs should still be met, but the special needs of the divorced sisters, the childless sisters, and the unmarried sisters should be accounted for.

4. Keep the program focused on the real concerns mothers share rather than on idealized prescriptions. If the ideal role model is mentioned, identify her as a divine model somewhat removed from earthly existence.

5. Bombard women with concrete examples of their own successful mothering. If the motherhood role is what is being honored, then all mothering should be recognized, not just that performed by women who also play the biological role.

6. Encourage women to do much of the talking. This can be a time when women can express love for their families and each other and appreciation for the growth that they have experienced through their calling as women. Sharing their struggles as they search for role definition can strengthen the bond women need to feel as sisters.

7. Do not give any women flowers unless all women can be equally honored and unless men can also be appropriately recognized with a gift on Father's Day.

8. Continue to have the Primary sing. The children have always been the best part of any Mother's Day program. They are the only reason that mothers exist and that a celebration is even possible.

Another mother, Beth Finch Hadengren from Provo, Utah, explains her frustrations over the kinds of sentiments articulated in Mother's Day programs across the Church. She writes:

I feel that the challenges of being an LDS mother most on Mother's Day. Ever since I became a mother I have hated Mother's Day talks. I usually slouch in the back of the chapel, painfully aware of the unwashed dishes at home, smudges on my baby's face, and wrinkles in my little girl's dress. I listen to the talks about the wonderful mothers, look at all the smiling mothers around me, and am convinced that every other mother really is that perfect. Every other mother does read the scriptures and jogs daily without fail, every other mother never raises her voice, every other mother keeps a perfectly neat and orderly house and serves gourmet meals exactly on time.

Rationally, of course, I know this can't be true. Mothers, after all, are human, and all of us have certain problems that keep us from being that "ideal Mormon mother." But still the myth continues: If we just tried harder to do all those things that must be essential--like baking all our bread, sewing all the clothes, having the house perfect--we will read the state of perfect motherhood.

There is a Church commercial that has been on television quite a bit this last week. The final statement is, "Mother, you don't have to be everything to mean everything to me." The scenes throughout the commercial show mothers caring for their children--loving them.

And there, I think, is the real challenge of motherhood. Granted, the cleaning, the cooking, the sewing offer challenges, but those challenges are similar to the challenges facing any business executive, law enforcement officer, city worker, or lawyer. They're part of the job. Some are fun challenges, some are boring, some are more important, some are less important. They're just part of the job of housekeeping.

But motherhood is much more than just a house-keeping job. We are not just housekeepers. We are truly partners with God, not only in the birth process, but, most importantly, in the nurturing of those young spirits that come to

us. We, like Christ, have dedicated our first priorities to serving. There is nothing so eternally important as how we teach our children, inculcating in them love of God, love of their fellow beings, love of virtue. Not only will this teaching have eternal value, but it is also probably the best contribution that we can make to our society and our country.

That is not to say that mothering must be our only occupation. In fact, in some paradoxical way, nothing could defeat our purpose of raising strong, self-sufficient children as quickly as our devoting all of our attention to them.

Each of us is a unique individual, progeny of our Heavenly Father, with all of the innate power such daughterhood implies. Each of us has been blessed with certain talents, each of us has her own unique abilities to contribute to our homes, to our society, to our world.

It is for this reason that the "Ideal Mother Syndrome" is not only depressing but eternally defeating. While we are trying so hard to be everything that we think a Mormon woman should be, we run the risk of not developing and using our own unique talents fully. There are probably as many different ways to be a good mother as there are mothers. We do not have to plug ourselves into a pigeonhole of conformity and compete with every other mother to see who can come closest to that ideal form.

What we do need to do (and here is a delightful, difficult challenge) is to find and recognize our own special strengths and talents and use them in teaching, nurturing, and loving our children. At the same time, we should use our God-given talents to strengthen our communities, our world.

Lee Martin of Salt Lake City, Utah, provides a comparative perspective on present and past Mother's Day celebrations that she has known:

Having grown up in the Baptist church, I will remember the Mother's Day services. Women wearing white corsages to honor deceased mothers or red corsages to recognize mothers still alive filled the congregation to overflowing. Our minister would smile from the pulpit as he extolled the innumerable good qualities of Earth's protector, Mother, in twenty minutes or less. And each year he would close his sermon with the over-used ruby quote from Proverbs then rush to the door to shake hands with as many of the departing flock as possible.

Mother's Day was actually quite routine--almost the same as every other Sunday--except that Dad was waiting at home to present us with his famous plate of appetizers: raw oysters with saltines and spiced shrimp. Mother detested raw oysters but always managed to eat one to spare Dad's feelings.

Hors d'oeuvres aside, dinner--the usual roast chicken--was served, followed by dessert. One year we had Oreo cookies because Dad's pie crust burned beyond recognition. As I cleared the dishes and swept, Dad sloshed dish water all over the floor trying to maneuver the stacked plates. Relatives always arrived to visit Grandmother and present small gifts. I saw Mother's Day as simple, traditional, predictable, and brief.

Years later, as a convert, I was introduced to the elaborate Mother's Day plans concocted by the Church members. How amusing to witness over a dozen talks crammed into a 75-minute session, interspersed with musical numbers representing every age group in the ward! Then, following the closing prayer, that abominable request: All mothers were to stand to be honored with a wilted house plant, a tomato plant, or a single petunia. The chapel then quickly emptied as families hurried home so that fathers and children could play "chef for the day" and Mother could get her once-a-year reprieve from the kitchen.

For eleven years as a mother, I've gone through this ritual and have tried to keep my sense of humor. If we mothers are as wonderful as we're led to believe, then why is Mother's Day so stressful? Surely we could dispense with the archaic "stand and be counted" routine. Perhaps some wards have. And why can't we have one or two talks to honor mothers instead of a dozen shots in the dark? With fewer talks and musical numbers, the block of time could be reduced so that mothers could have more time at home to enjoy their rest and their families! Additionally, it would be nice if more fathers would commit themselves to kitchen duty every Sunday, instead of just once a year. Some sisters have already experienced this luxury, but most of us are still waiting.

Change usually comes slowly, almost unnoticeably, but I still have hope that Mother's Day will be less complicated in the future. I know

only too well what Anne Morrow Lindbergh meant when she said, "What a circus act we women perform every day of our lives." Even circus performers should have a few days off now and then.

Marilyn M. Smolka of Salt Lake City, Utah, analyzes why this day brings pain to so many in the Church. She focuses on the exclusionary aspects of our celebrations and the inappropriateness of that exclusion in the Church of Jesus Christ.

Mother's Day is a cultural phenomenon and not a doctrinal precept and as such is a holiday that is exclusive rather than inclusive. Other holidays such as Christmas, the Fourth of July, and Easter are more inclusive--everyone can receive some joy and benefit.

Every year my heart aches for the fine women who find themselves excluded or sidelined because they don't qualify for a carnation. I think of my friend Maxine who is not a mother but who has spent a lifetime nurturing neighbors, friends, and relatives. I think of my friend Joan who is not a mother but who spends a great deal of her life caring for newborns at the ICU at University Hospital as a neo-natalogist. I think of my friend Fan who is not a mother but who devotes hours and hours of her life to young children as a doctor in pediatric neurology, often finding herself on call at the hospital for entire nights. I think of other friends who have yearned for natural children but because of physiological restrictions have been denied the blessing of motherhood. I think of women who work outside the home because of necessity who are not able to spend the time that they would like at mothering. I think of women who agonize over a wayward child and for whom the term *motherhood* is a painful one, of women who have lost a husband through divorce or death and are not able to have the joy of sharing parenthood, and of women who would love to be mothers but who haven't yet had the chance to be wives.

In the four and a half years that my husband and I spent in the University Singles Stake, I saw young women, in their late twenties and early thirties, wrestling with serious questions. Why am I not married? If I am not married, shall I pursue a professional career or just find something to bide my time until I do find "Mr. Right"? Once I have invested the time, money, and effort in training, how will I deal with a professional career if I finally do get married?

For these women, I saw the need for strong role models--women who are successful in whatever station of life they find themselves. Instead of feeling guilty or apologetic for things we cannot do, or don't have time to do, or don't even want to do, we should cherish our differences, our strengths, our diversity.

In an official Church statement in 1976, the First Presidency said:

Each woman is an honored, revered daughter of God, having every right and responsibility to develop fully her potential as a woman.

There is no greater responsibility and opportunity, no task to which woman may put her hand so broad and inspiring, so filled with interest, so demanding of intelligence and capability, so rewarding as that of wife, mother, and homemaker. But that does not mean all her activities must be confined to that important role.

Women have a duty to exercise their mental capacities, to enlarge upon their talents, and to increase their skills. They must give to the world the best they have in a manner that will be productive of the most good along the paths their lives may take.

It is true that parenthood is one of the most demanding pursuits in life, exacting patience, sacrifice, long-suffering, discernment, love, unselfishness, and service. But there are other aspects to life that also demand these same commitments and characteristics and that force us to develop these qualities.

To me, life is a process of finding one's greatest potential, of understanding our Father in Heaven's plan and how we fit into it. It is expansive, not restrictive, ennobling not belittling. We should welcome the exhilaration of meeting new challenges wherever they lie. We should rejoice in motherhood, but we should also rejoice no matter where we are in life because each stage presents opportunities for growth.

I love Relief Society because I see it as a vehicle for women to enhance their lives--all women, not just mothers. I see Relief Society as not only offering instruction in numbers of different areas but as offering support to one

Cont. on p.12

Sisters Speak continued



another—a sharing of joys and successes, of disappointments and failures, of encouragement and inspiration, of being inclusive rather than exclusive. Our purpose should not be to solve or erase problems but to offer support, skills, and confidence. We need to encircle each other with kindness, patience, love, charity. We need to help each other reach our highest potential.

And what is the reward for reaching this potential? Motherhood may indeed be one of the rewards, one of our satisfactions. But the reward should come for each woman in how well she has incorporated godly characteristics into her life: service, integrity, dependability, faithfulness, trustworthiness, obedience.

As women we should also affirm our commonalities: that we can nurture others; that as women we were created specifically and individually with anatomical, physiological, emotional, and hormonal differences from men; that we have been chosen for different purposes than men; that we can each achieve a testimony of the divinity of God the Father, His son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost; that we can each fill our lives to the brim and then let our fullness overflow to others.

I have no wish to deny mothers any honor that they may receive on Mother's Day, but I think our Father in Heaven would want us all to be honored for trying the best that we can. We are all children of our Father in Heaven to be drawn into a circle of success. As women, we should be proud of our accomplishments whether we are mothers on Mother's Day or not. We should be proud of our differences, proud of our similarities, proud that we can each grow no matter what the rate or circumstance. Rather than standing to receive a carnation, I would prefer to receive praise on my knees from a loving Father in Heaven for having fulfilled my destiny in life.

While Doris Sneyley in Falls Church, Virginia, shares some of the opinions about the typical talks that we hear on Mother's Day, she has found some joys to remember from her celebration of the day over the years. She describes them here:

One of the most rewarding results of motherhood for me has been the acquisition of in-law children. It is especially great to realize that my five married children all had the intelligence and good sense to select the spouses that they did. The fact that they did so well gives me a feeling of satisfaction and contentment. Perhaps way back during their growing up years, I did something right.

For Mother's Day this year I was invited to the home of a daughter-in-law and her husband, my son. When I opened the door, I was greeted by children, in-law children, grandchildren, balloons, posters, and good food. Everyone was thoroughly happy at the look of surprise and pleasure on Grandma's face. To me this was the perfect way to spend Mother's Day. What greater happiness can there be than expressions of love from those who are most near and dear.

What is Mother's Day after all the children are gone? It's a little grandchild coming to spend the night because she wants to. It's a son stopping in for a "bite to eat" because his wife is working. (He chose me over MacDonald's.) It's a daughter-in-law, apologizing as she asks if Grandma can babysit again: "You are the only one I trust to take care of him." It's getting letters from the children and grandchildren who are far away. It's being an interested and non-interfering spectator to career successes and failures. It's accepting different political views and even different religions. It's watching the talents that the grandchildren have been blessed with. It's making a new quilt as each grandbaby graduates into a big bed. It can be an all encompassing career. It's fun. Every day is Mother's Day.

Some specific wish-lists for improved Mother's Days came from our sisters and readers around the country. Susanne Hawes from New Orleans, Louisiana, shares her wish with us for a better day:

On Mother's Day, I would like to attend church and avoid hearing the quintessential LDS mothers praised to the skies. You know, the woman with the high priest husband, eight children (one just married in the temple, two on missions, and the other five dutifully following in their footsteps), two dogs, and a spotless house. This "Patti Perfect" does not exist, yet she arises like a phoenix each Mother's Day in thousands of wards and branches.

As I looked around our ward this Mother's Day, I saw a couple of sisters who were coming close to the ideal Mormon mom—and these women are role models for the rest of us. Most of the faces, however, belonged to the beautiful, strong

sisters struggling with a multitude of different problems.

In the back (near the door) were several young mothers with three or four children each. Many of these women have poetry or music or an essay in their souls, but no chance to let these see the light of day through the tunnel of dirty diapers and runny noses. There were other sisters in the audience who would give a fortune to become mothers, yet have no children. In the front pew sat a young divorcee who was juggling school, two boys, and a full-time job. Behind her was another divorced sister holding two jobs to keep bread on the table and singlehandedly facing the heartbreak of a son involved in drugs and drinking. There were the widows who come alone each Sunday and sit together. Over there was a sister who has fought back from serious mental illness to see two of her children leave the Church. The medical student's wife on the left side was expecting her fourth child. She hardly sees her spouse because of school, his job at the hospital, and his church work. She is not looking forward to this "new little spirit" to face by herself. All around were sisters who are married to non-members or inactive husbands and are struggling to keep their children in the Church.

The praises of "supermom" just make most of us feel guilty and unfit. When we hear Sister Patti extolled, we doubt our own adequacy as mothers. What we need is someone to pat us on the back and tell us that our Heavenly Father and Mother love us and understand our aspirations and sorrows. We need encouragement to face tomorrow and a boost for our morale. We don't need a comparison with an unattainable ideal; instead, we need our diversity recognized and condoned and our efforts encouraged. Mother's Day should leave us feeling appreciated for what we are and ready to face the next 364 days with courage and humor.

Pam Morrison Tonkovich of Eagle River, Wisconsin, writes to us of her ideal Mother's Day:

The youngest mother. The oldest mother. The mother with the most children. The newest mother. Mother's Day. Our culture seems to seek for superlatives in every forum, as if these superlatives would somehow help us to know ourselves or each other better. I would like to see Sacrament Meeting reclaimed from our typical Mother's Day observances. Distributing honors to women on Mother's Day indicates that there is a field of competition, and I don't care to find another friend crying in her car after receiving her carnation.

I have endured some programs by thinking of the wonder that my own mother was able to communicate to me about our friendship and other programs by wondering if it is really efficacious for children to make plagiarized declarations of love in public. I have stayed home a couple of times.

My perfect Mother's Day? Part of me wants to be alone, in some tranquil place like our backyard where I can watch an eagle fish and hear a loon cry in the evening. I want to renew my hopes, realize my skills, and unearth my dreams in a day without exigencies. I need to rescue myself—understanding from disorder and confusion.

Another part of me wants to spend the day alone with my mother, to ask her about past and present hopes, fulfilled and not. As I get older, she seems even more willing to reveal herself, disappointments and all, sensing that I am ready to see her as a person. In so doing, I could learn how to present my whole self to our daughters as they grow.

Part of me wants not only to be nourished and replenished, but indulgently feasted. I would like sliced peaches for breakfast, with cream, in a blue glazed bowl. May is too early for peaches, and Sunday morning activity too feverish. Could our brothers conduct and teach Primary for one day? I think that I would like an uninterrupted bath.

Finally, one Mother's Day, I want to join with others to contribute to some profoundly good cause, if only as a fleeting statement against the cruelties of this world. Sometimes I get impatient with the nearly imperceptible yet daily victories over selfishness that I hope are occurring within our family. Viewed so closely and constantly, growth is hard to perceive, so I imagine doing some good and great thing some Mother's Day. Superlatives are a comfort, I guess.

From Bellevue, Washington, Jennifer Arave Coleman expresses her suggestions for how to improve the celebration:

Instead of lauding mothers for their accomplishments—which so often are restricted by the speaker to number of children and sacrifices made—I'd like to hear a Mother's Day tribute to the imperfect mother—a mother loved in spite of her inadequacies.

For example:

the mother who doesn't get up in the morning to fix her teenagers' breakfast before they leave for seminary. She reasons that they can pour Cheerios into a bowl as well as she can. She opts instead to spare herself the dull, morning headache from lack of sleep so that she cannot only accomplish her myriad responsibilities but enjoy herself as well.

the mother who really can't stand the creative mess of finger paints and crusty play dough and allows it only on occasion but is ever willing to read a good book to her children or take them outdoors for some fun exercise.

the mother who has been known to lose her temper and, yes, even scream at her children. (This same mother notes with dismay that a little harshness produces quicker and more long-lasting results than the gentle reminders espoused by mother education lessons.)

the mother who declares an "official rest period" each afternoon when the children are expected to go and play quietly in their rooms—maybe even get bored—because she feels that not only do children need to learn how to entertain themselves but that she needs a chance to nap, read, sew, create, or watch television by herself. The truly radical mother will go one step further and unplug the telephone during this sacrosanct hour.

the mother who does not always gird up her loins and paste an angelic smile on her face. She admits that she, too, has bad days and is not immune to discouragement, frustration, and depression. She does not place herself on a pedestal for her children but manages to communicate with them as a real human being first, and as a mother second.

If I could hear this kind of tribute—and honesty—on Mother's Day, I would come away feeling more encouraged as a mother rather than more discouraged, more valued for what I am than for what I do, and deeply touched to be reminded that you don't have to be perfect to be loved.

Georgia Thompson of Cedar City, Utah, and Shirley Oscaeson of Paoli, Pennsylvania, share their favorite fantasies with us on how to celebrate this day. Georgia writes first:

If I were to choose a perfect Mother's Day, I would surround myself with the three generations of mothers in my family who have touched my life—either by rearing me or through genealogy.

I would take my mother, my grandmother, and my great-grandmother to a quiet spot to have a long visit. If possible, I would also bring my paternal grandmother and great-grandmother. I know almost nothing about my paternal great-grandmother. I would want to sit and talk about so many things—about the choices each of us made for our lives. It would be worthwhile to know how they felt about the gospel, about learning, about being female, and about coping with such things as polygamy, children's deaths, and poverty.

None of these women live today. My mother was killed in an accident in the 1960s just before I left for graduate study in the East. She never met my husband, nor grandmothered my child. The others were gone before her death. It would be special day if we could spend it together. In some ways, it wouldn't be just a day of motherhood but more a day of intergenerational sisterhood.

Shirley shares a recent experience with a Mother's Day that "worked" for her:

The best Mother's Day program that I ever attended was one of the simplest in format that I can recall. All the children and youth were asked, several weeks beforehand, to tell why they loved their mothers. On Mother's Day, the children's own brief phrases or sentences were read from the pulpit and attributed to the child. These were interspersed with lovely musical numbers.

There were statements from the very youngest like, "Because she's pretty" and "She draws me pictures" to ones almost as simple like "She's always there then I need her" or "She understands me." Many were humorous, some poignant, and others touching. All were too brief to be audacious, and nearly every family in the ward was represented.

Mothers were pleased and surprised to hear their children's tributes, and no one went away burdened with guilt over what she had not accomplished. No mothers were singled out as perfect role models for all others in the ward to emulate. It was a delightful, unbeat change for a Mother's Day program, and one I would happily sit through again.

Cont. on p. 20

Pilgrimage to Bethlehem

I write both in sorrow and in joy for Christmases past. To those of you—mothers and fathers—who are young enough to be my sons and daughters: Don't let the years disappear in a fog of forgetfulness, in journeys to Bethlehem that are incomplete.

Bethlehem does not change. The miracle of Jesus does not change. But what a waste of human potential if our way of looking does not change, if each year we do not find some new meaning. In this darkest time of the year, the winter solstice, we should be caught up in a stirring, a gathering excitement. The doors of consciousness should open and the thoughts and feelings of others should flow in to enrich and to bless. Only then is the birth able to transform us.

Those of us looking back on many Christmases discover we remember those during which we stumbled on some moment of spiritual insight, some deepened understanding of what it all means. Even a line in a Christmas carol may glow with new significance: "How *silently*, how *silently*, the wondrous gift is given." We have returned safely with some treasure found at the manger.

We think, alas, that our Christmases will go on and on unchanged. They don't. I remember when I was a little girl that we wanted so much to have a fireplace. So my brothers constructed one from a wooden frame, brick-patterned crepe paper, a few sticks, and red tissue over a naked light bulb. Within the intimacy of the sheltering family, we created our own magic. But we never found that same intimacy again, even with the eventual gas log.

Another family remembers 1954 as particularly precious. Just before her death, Mother had planned a special gift for each one, including new luggage for a college-bound daughter. In spite of her absence, the children all carefully observed their usual Christmas rituals. But, in a few short months the children had scattered.

I remember the Christmas that we made a phonograph record to send back from Delaware to the folks in Utah. In those days there were no portable tape recorders, so we went to the recording shop after closing. My husband, Henry, was master of ceremonies; David, age ten, told about Christmas customs in Mexico; Karen, age five, sang "The Friendly Beasts"; Sally read the nativity story; I played and said the words of a Christmas carol that a friend and I had written. It was a "gathered" experience. I remember the feeling of peace as we crossed the now-quiet business street in the twilight.

We never made another record. What would it mean to us now, if there were a dozen records, or even two? Our children have been deprived of a portion of their heritage.

So it is part of my plea that at least a home evening be devoted to an evaluation of each year's Christmas. What, for each one in the family, was the moment when Christmas became most alive?

Some odd responses may result. Children's perceptions may grow from year to year; Mother may find her moment an unexpected one. After the bustle of a holiday dinner for some lonely foreign students, a woman that I know and her seemingly rebellious daughter were washing the dishes. Conversation drifted to those with special talents.

The mother said, "I'm afraid I haven't any."

"Yes, you have," said the daughter. "You do kindness."

That was the mother's moment of Christmas. Such experiences—the unexpected expression of love—will become a cherished memory and should be written down.

Perhaps some Christmases are less than successful, and the pilgrimage to Bethlehem hits a road block. There was the year when, against our better judgment, we were coerced too soon into buying the children watches. Commercialism really sabotaged that Christmas. Even worse was the time that I decided that, because we had kinfolk nearby who would welcome them for the holiday, we could discourage the children from coming home from college. We felt justified in passing up the expense and the physical strain; it was a sad mistake.

Though Christ a thousand times

In Bethlehem be born,

If he be not born in thee

Thy soul is still forlorn.

How strange it was that in crowded Bethlehem only a few shepherds heard the heavenly hosts. Only a few shepherds. Let us try to be good shepherds this year, keeping watch over our flocks lest the wolves of commercialism and fatigue and ingratitude blind our eyes to the sky. Let us take heed of the stirrings in our hearts. These stirrings are promptings from God toward a sacred journey, and they should be treasured: "And Mary kept these things and pondered them in her heart."

My small pilgrimage to Bethlehem is only one of many. What happens to each of us individually may not be of cosmic significance. But if we believe in progression as a gospel principle, it behooves us to increase our awareness, to become more in tune, to risk more journeys. This year let there be one moment so luminous and wise that we can cup it in our hands and say, "This, now, is Christmas." And may it become a keepsake for gracious remembering.

Helen C. Stark
Salem, Utah

MY LAST SACRAMENT MEETING TALK (continued)

When the meeting was over, we spontaneously embraced, tears in our eyes. I felt almost as though I had given birth. Now Maureen Beecher and Lavina Anderson are editing another book of Mormon women essays. The Wilcox essay will be included.

Another writer who has worked deeply in this area is Carol Lynn Pearson. She has a poem that begins "I live in a motherless house. . . ."

Mary Bradford is preparing a second volume of *Mormon Women Speak*, as well as putting together a book of her own essays. It seems to be a fertile time.

I throw these important names around to show that here is a serious development. I hope we

are not afraid of what it portends. I believe that every institution has a growing edge which should not be dulled nor merely tolerated. It should be appreciated for its potential for revitalization. I am grateful that I have been involved in this ferment. There is, I believe, a possibility for creative tension between the precious old and the experimental new. In an ongoing quest for wholeness, both are essential.

As I prepared this talk, I began to see how my personal search for the feminine is more fundamental than I had realized. These young women have mothered me. Priesthood blessing for healing have ministered to me. Ordinances like baptism and the sacrament are replete with symbols of wholeness and growth. I have come to believe that women live by *symbols*.

Once, in meditation, I slipped behind the surface of reality. Suddenly everything was suffused with a heavenly glow. Every particle and atom throbbled with an undercurrent of song. I felt that it is true that tenderness and goodness and joy sustain the universe. I treasure this fleeting affirmation.

I hope that in this, my final sacrament meeting talk, you have received my sharing with a measure of acceptance. I feel that unity and diversity are two sides of a precious coin.

May our Heavenly Father guide us to understanding, and may our Heavenly Mother nurture us. This is my prayer for each of us.

Helen C. Stark
Salem, Utah



A GRANDMOTHER—I?

The question came suddenly, in the direct way a child has of pinpointing issues and prodding stiff mental muscles to activity.

We had recently moved to a "new" old house. It contained generous rooms in goodly numbers, dark woodwork and small windows—typical of its era. I had what I wanted: all four bedrooms and two bathrooms upstairs, a big kitchen, a mammoth dining room for entertaining family-style, and an adequate fruit room—for which my husband says I bought the house. And my husband claimed his long-coveted den with handsome bookshelves and doors that closed—for which I say he bought the house. The family and television room was far enough removed from the kitchen and living areas to muffle the noise. In fact, we could sit at the table after dinner and watch the children's antics through French doors and carry on a quiet, somewhat intelligent conversation, a feat impossible since the birth of our first child. Now we were four and another on the way.

Having barely settled in, we had learned that this was real living. Each of us could find a quiet corner to contemplate, soothe ruffled nerves, or plain escape—behind solid doors that closed.

But right in the midst of our delight—in fact, just as I was taking golden, nutty-smelling loaves from the oven in the glow of self-satisfaction—she asked the question. Matter-of-factly, our six-year-old daughter opened the kitchen door on her return from school and said, "Mother, is this the house you're going to be a grandmother in?"

At that moment I wasn't contemplating grandmotherhood. Barely in my thirties, I watched four busy children of my own play around me. The moment pressed too real, dust settled too regularly, clothes needed washing too often, tummies growled with hunger too unceasingly. Being a grandmother did not even loom on the distant horizon. Despite my lightly tossed-out, "I hope so," however, my mind ponders the question. Perhaps busy young mothers should plan for the time when children are off with families of their own. Time flies, jet propelled. When my first grandchild is born, will I be ready for the challenge to provide memories of grandma's wonderful home and her endearing and enduring qualities?

Our attitude toward our homes is a case in point. Many people build and move, only to move again, or they constantly complain about the shortcomings of present homes. I wonder what the memories of the grandchildren of such restless people will be. Will there be a confused kaleidoscope of shining fixtures and split levels, or will part of grandma's charm be in her constant creation of new environments?

Certainly our thoughts were not on our grandchildren when we bought our home. Other needs took precedence—space available with limited funds. Our house can become grandparent's home, but our decision might have been considered differently had we anticipated a full lifetime in these living quarters.

Persons and houses are inseparable. Houses, new or old, long or briefly lived in, speak of those who occupy them. One of my grandmothers graced a tall, boxy, red-and-white house. Grandmother and her house both stood prim and neat. Her cellar was full of cool pans of thick, yellow

cream for pouring over warm pies, crisp vegetables, and fluffy potatoes. Sissy that I was, I never allowed myself to enter that intriguing cavern. Its magic could only be controlled by grandmother's enchanted hands.

Perhaps I enjoyed grandmother's two-story house so much that I wanted one of my own. I remember that lye-scrubbed, bare wooden stairway that pinned tiny slivers into our posteriors as we bumped downward on numerous rides from top to bottom. I remember imaginary shows through the window in front of those stairs as we sat on the steps in a world of make-believe.

Petite, her laughing eyes accentuating her sense of humor, grandmother shared stories. Her true stories of pioneering Indian sores and hardships were like fairy tales to audiences of grandchildren. How could this greying little woman in her black silk dress with starched white apron have seen Indians? Food, stories, laughter, memories! Good gifts from a grandmother.

Grandmother E. by contrast lived in a two-room house. She had only my brothers and sisters and me for grandchildren. She had no cellar or stairway, but she owned a cupboard with hand-painted dishes and silver spoons in a cranberry-glass spoon holder, and hard candies were stashed away in little covered dishes here and there. She played a small pump-organ and sang and step-danced and seemed very talented to us. Her tales told of treasures saved in her trunk. This one was to have that quilt and the other her cameo, and so on. Sometimes, wicked as it was, we could hardly wait until she was gone so we could have that promised picture that she had painted, or that dish, or that bedspread that she was saving in her trunk—just for us. She lived to be ninety-one. Time destroyed much of what she cherished before a new owner ever claimed it. But some hand-painted dishes in my own cupboard remind me of her; my daughter can pass her cameo on to her own daughter; the bird picture painted with her own hand on velvet reminds all of her appreciation for lovely things.

Our children's grandmothers are different. Grandmother S. has a rumpus room where she wields a ping pong paddle with vigor. Her grandchildren anticipate visits to her home because she lives far away. When we go, what fun, what plans! She plans picnics, visits to the beach, trips to the river for smelt, shopping excursions—even work projects, if we arrive during the berry or bean season.

Mostly, though, our children will remember their grandparents' frequent business trips to our city—trips to the airport to greet them and trips to bid them farewell. They will remember their time and energy and enthusiasm for games; their interest in giving support at special activities; their desire to spend time in nothing more than chatting. They will remember Grandmother, smartly dressed, very much a part of Granddad's business contacts and accomplishing a lot on her own, as well.

Grandma T. brings the "olden" days into our home. She really did some pioneering in the West. Our western-television-conscious children are amazed when she tells of the year famous badman Butch Cassidy "holed-up in Star Valley," how he came to the dances, how she was sitting with her best friend at the saw mill when the officers cap-

tured his accomplice, how her mother helped to bandage Cassidy's head after he was wounded in the struggle, how he had even eaten at their family table before they knew who he was. Other equally-exciting tales, all true, seem somehow unreal and unbelievable, even as were the stories of my own grandmother, Grandma T.'s mother.

Her home is closer and in a smaller community. Here the children find the pleasure more in being out-of-doors than in her home. Just a few blocks from her front door the canyons beckon as do green fields for running in (with occasional cow pie!) and barns filled with hay for jumping in. They can buy a penny's worth of candy from a little store on Main Street, a short two blocks away. They can bend a pin and tie it on a willow and fish from the ditch that runs through the yard. There is room to unfold both body and spirit.

Yes, I do hope that this is the house that I'll be a grandmother in. I would like it filled with traditions and memories for my children and their children. If only I can remember how happy these days are when the dog has again mistaken the carpet for grass, when more milk is spilled than swallowed, when the bathtub ring is constant, and when my voice—even to me—sounds shrill and sharp.



Donna Smart
Salt Lake City, Utah

Almost thirty years have elapsed since I wrote "A Grandmother, I?" and sent it to the *Relief Society Magazine*. They rejected it. From my own vantage point now I understand why, but not from theirs then, or now. The question and the premise of the article are provocative, but much of what I said is simplistic, idealistic, and could even be guilt-producing. Now I would write differently because all four of the grandmothers mentioned are gone and other things about their lives impress me more, but that is another story.

The point of this postscript is to say that this *is* a great house to become a grandmother in. For years I thought grandparents were a bit sappy. But with the first glimpse of that first grandchild, I succumbed. The feeling has intensified with each of seven. One I knew only three weeks, but I had known him and will know him forever.

Our grandchildren will not remember me for those charming qualities of my own grandmothers—or even for those of their parents' grandmothers. I'm bustier now than when I was raising my children. Since my fiftieth birthday I have hiked a semi-survival fifty miles through Coyote Gulch; repelled down awesome cliffs on the way to the Dirty Devil; endured a stabbing, a crash landing in Miami, to name a few. In some ways life began at sixty for me. I now find myself with two absorbing jobs that ostensibly take fifty hours a week to fulfill—working on the *Optic Encyclopedia* and planning and executing Chautauquas for the Utah Endowment for the Humanities.

My point, I guess, is that I now understand that grandmothers are individuals whose love is expressed uniquely. Dare I hope that my grandchildren will remember me fondly?





CHICKENS



Small chickens, just setting out on the journey of life, look so bright and alert and they are in fact so dreadfully stupid. They are so much like people they mix one up in one's judgments of life.

from "The Egg" by
Sherwood Anderson

The last time that I went to help unload the chicks, things generally went the same as usual. It was hard to get up when Dad apologetically knelt by my bed and kissed my cheek. The awakening was much more pleasant than the raucous bleat of my alarm clock, but that didn't change the fact that it was 4:00 A.M. I dragged myself from bed, pulled on my oldest clothes and shoes, and went downstairs to accept toast and juice from my mother and to wait for my sister and brothers to emerge from the dark sanctuaries of their respective bedrooms. When we walked outside the blast of frozen air vitalized us somewhat. Because the wind hadn't really risen the night before, the air still smelt faintly of the exhaust and chimney smoke of the previous day. But it was basically a clean, fresh smell--the smell of night almost ready to give way to day. We trudged to the truck and climbed in to huddle together while we waited for Dad. By the time we got to the brood-grow house to wait for the chicks, the cab of the truck was warm.

The "day-old chick industry" Mr. Wilson began in 1992 has become so efficient and so widespread that almost no large operation hatches its own birds anymore. The chicks are shipped, usually by truck, from huge, sophisticated hatcheries and arrive at their destinations before their one-day birthday. The chicks are all female, they are almost all alive, and nearly all of the living are healthy. The last time that I helped with the process I found one dead and about three sickly in the approximately 5,000 that I unloaded.

On this morning, we arrived before the truck containing the 40,000 chicks. We relaxed for a while, but the minute the truck pulled up we began to act. My brothers helped Dad, Grandpa, Rogelio, and the driver unload the boxes while Lori and I began to fill the water cones in the cages. When all of the birds had been moved into the warmth of the building, we began the real work. We began transferring the chicks from their 2" x 1-1/2" x 4" boxes to the cages where they would live until they, at twenty-two weeks, would be moved from the brood-grow to the main ranch, five miles to the south.

I don't know how many times I had helped in the unloading process. I had always considered the whole experience to be pretty good fun. But on this one day, for some reason, things depressed me. The vast quantity of life seemed suddenly overwhelming. Each one of those little birds looked exactly like thousands of her roommates. Everything they would do, from pecking out of the shell to eating feed to laying eggs that are immediately conveyor-belted to someone's breakfast table, would be done en masse.

I felt a rush of sympathy as I scooped the chicks from the box to the cage. The rows of two-tiered cages provide better light and air for the chicks on the top level; they grow to be bigger and more lively than their neighbors downstairs. A chicken placed on the bottom shelf is raised in a sort of poultry ghetto. I felt sorry for the ones that I put there, but half have to start out in less than ideal circumstances; that's just the way things are. The good space is limited.

While they are still quite young, the chicks start having things done to them "for their own good." They are "debeaked" so that they cannot peck each other to death. Later, they are given shots that will prevent the wide assortment of chicken diseases that can make a hen's life miserable. If chickens were rational, thinking birds, they would probably choose to be beakless and vaccinated instead of bloody and sick, but they don't understand their temporary pain any more than a baby understands when her bottom is jabbed full of immunizing needles. I felt sorry about their hopeless lack of understanding.

Like most living things, chickens start out cute. The day-old chicks look like they're straight from a Hallmark card. But, as the first weeks pass, the birds get uglier and uglier. They reach the pinnacle of homeliness at about three weeks--adolescence--when thin white feathers have nearly displaced the soft yellow down. The poor girls are thin, scrawny, and squawky. Soon, they will become traditional white-bodied, red-combed Leghorns, but no one will ever coo and cluck over their cuteness again. They will have officially entered the working world.

I have occasionally conducted groups of visitors, usually school classes, on a tour of the farm. Some people are horribly shaken by their glimpse of the life a hen leads. One second-grade teacher even cried. Through her tears, she yelled at me about the unfairness of the system. Those poor birds have no freedom! They're so crowded together! They can't decide what to do by themselves! I tried to explain that the hens were being fed and housed in the manner that resulted in the highest production. Maybe it wasn't fair, but neither were most things. I didn't convince the teacher. Still obviously weepy, she gathered her students, and they flocked down the hill to be piled into their little yellow bus.

Until this particular morning, all of my experiences with chickens had been cataloged in my mind under "unimportant" or "to be considered later." That morning the sight of the almost endless rows of tiny yellow bodies caused a flow of memories and knowledge. I thought about how typical and unseen I had felt at BYU and about what a minuscule section of the universe holds the BYU campus. I thought about the unfairness of the "system" that seems to randomly put some people on the "top row" and others on "the bottom." I thought about all of the unexplained trials and pain that no one completely understands. I thought about my future and its inescapable procession of work-filled days and years.

I worried, and correlated, and mentally paraded my sorrows until I saw myself as nothing more than a slightly humanized fowl, cackling my way through life with no real individuality, beauty, or understanding. I was a nervous, stupid bird, having no more effect on the world than does a silly Leghorn. My thoughts led me to reread Anderson's "The Egg," a short story that equates, with a kind of tragic humor, the pathetically futile existence of chickens to what Anderson sees as the equally hopeless lives of men. The story deepened my conviction that I had no real choice in the determination of my destiny, that I was scratching my way through life with a series of useless attempts to differentiate myself from the countless number of people, and chickens, populating the earth.

But one day, when my brooding had reached its deepest level, I remembered the second-grade teacher. She had seen the birds through a distorted perception. Maybe she had had a traumatic childhood experience. Maybe the responsibility of virtually controlling the activities of twenty-five children all day had caused anything to do with freedom and decision-making power to become monumentally important to her. Whatever the reason for her perspective, it seemed somehow irrational. But now my own thought process was becoming like hers. I was disturbed because of the circumstances of those chickens and because of what I thought that symbolized to me. Was that correlation so wrong? I began to wonder if I had possibly gotten carried away with my analogizing. I started to think of reasons why chickens are not "so much like people." When I remembered that I am actually no more a chicken than I am the Queen of England, the reasons rushed in.

Sometimes I am a small part of a huge crowd, but I am never completely sucked into the group to the extent that I lose my individuality completely. Where I have been "assigned" in the world is not a permanent station unless I make it so. Maybe I will remain in the "cage" that I grew up in until I die, but I don't have to wait for a pair of thick, white gloves to move me. I can leave on my own power. From the time a chick pokes her head from the shell until the day she graces a bowl of noodle soup, she will not understand the forces acting upon her, but I know more now than I did when my own second-grade teacher herded me around and when I die I'll know more still. Eventually, I will understand some of the why's.

Like everyone else on earth, I have a use, a purpose, a work. Sometimes the work seems distressingly similar to eating corn all day, but sometimes it's a little more rewarding, a little more creative. Last week I analyzed my feelings about the Equal Rights Amendment for the first time in months. I explained my criteria for choosing "good literature" to a roomful of women who really looked like individuals, and I described the principle of "relevant costs" to a student who had questions that I had never thought about before--all this in the course of doing my "work." The results of my efforts are more varied than a dozen eggs could ever be.

Cynthia Shupe
Albuquerque, New Mexico

• Nuclear Blues •

How Much for the Earth? A Suite of Poems: About Time for Considering, by Emma Lou Thayne (Salt Lake City, Utah: Eden Hill, 1983), distributed by Signature Books, Midvale, Utah, \$2.95 (paperback).

This tightly woven "suite" of eight poems was commissioned by Utahns United Against Nuclear War. Thayne invites the hearers to embark on their own odyssey, as she traces hers, of considering and understanding the consequences of nuclear holocaust. These unsentimentalized clips-of-life poems also persuade the hearer to ask "How much for the earth? What would I keep?", to see "Smiles exchanged so well we do not know our ages or conditions," and to hear "the white whisper of a needle in cloth."

The theme of her poems, or "Considerations," is summarized in the final lines of her last two poems, "Consider VI" and "Considering--The End": "... Even extermination/was not extinction/more than NEVER AGAIN/ NEVER!" and "It's time, It's time we said together/Yes to life. To ashes, simply No." Certainly the arms race and the possibility--perhaps probability--of global nuclear holocaust is a subject in which moral judgment is appropriate. We have all been horrified by descriptions of how we and our children would die. Where even outrage may not be inappropriate, however, Thayne is neither outraged nor shrill; as moral judgments go, hers is tender and gentle, a loving litany of considerations. Yet, morality so quickly becomes moralizing that I found myself uncomfortable with the repetition of her "never again" theme. It occasionally detracted from the fine poetry.

After an introductory poem, "About Considering," which bids us "to calculate whether we peacemakers/shall inherit or destroy this blessed earth," she begins her journey of understanding in "Consideration I." This poem is set in her high school biology class, where she first began to consider destruction while watching the burning of a strip of litmus paper: "The arm of my desk like a Ouija board lifted/ my hand expecting answers," and to ask "Did what we learned mean anything?" She answers, in "Consideration II," that the axiom, "Matter can neither be destroyed or created, only altered" is, in the face of extinction, "a finer ash/ than litmus, Mr. Garratt." Also in this poem she contrasts her young adult response to World War II ending with the atom bomb ("Didn't we sing, 'Happy Days are Here Again,'" with her graying-hair response, "Knowing what of gene mutations/ for thirty generations and radioactivity that could sift monsoons/ and cool the earth?")

"Consideration III" is set in the 1960s in the freshman English classes that she taught. "And me grading papers/ looking at myself/ and fire and ashes/ with eyes only starting to see." In "Consideration IV" she says, "I never saw my children born,/ but in bringing in another generation/ I saw it all . . ." "Coulson Paul Rich or Michael Abraham Markosian/ or maybe even Katie Ann Kilgore/ ghosts? . . . I say no/ . . . No Thank you. No."

"Considerations V" is one of her best portraits; here she describes her aunt, the last remaining of her "continuers."

white hair never put in a bob . . .
retired at seventy to her unlovely harmonica
music
. . . in a solitude cramping her lifetime
together
where a thousand hands could not accommodate
her generous resolve to get on with life. She
continues,
Aunt Edna.

The continuers.
I used to have a string of them.
. . . To tell me how.

But the best poem of this "suite" and one of the finest of her entire collection is "Consideration VI." Here she describes an experience at Dachau:

thirty feet away a man my age stood in the vast
square of gravel and took over my personal
history . . .

In this, the longest of the eight poems, the hearer is caught in the poet's tension of being

"part of a space not mine" and could feel, too, that "he will always be here."

. . . him in his light blue suit and
shirt and tie,
even his hair like women dipped in
bluing, . . .

He stared across the desolate parade ground.
His gaze, like memory pulled across a rasp,
riveted
on the blue plaster barracks and the one door,
a blue door . . .

The building keeps everything: it
remembers . . .

From this blue door, what corpses thrown
out, . . . ?
It is happening again in the blue of his eyes
on that blue door.

This poem of "blue" makes the collection worth having; however, the poem would have been even more powerful to me had it not ended with the moralizing lines about the six million and her family, if they too "were never to come back." But the body of this poem, like many others, is finely wrought and memorable. It sings above its sermon.

Maryann Olsen MacMurray
Salt Lake City, Utah

• Amazing Grace •

Greening Wheat: Fifteen Mormon Short Stories, edited by Levi S. Peterson, Orion Books, Midvale, Utah, 1983.

The Canyons of Grace, by Levi S. Peterson, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Illinois, 1982.

Levi S. Peterson is emerging as a Western writer of some note; that he also writes from a Mormon background adds relevance for *Exponent II* readers. Having read his stories in *Dialogue* and *Sunstone*, I looked forward to his edited collection *Greening Wheat: Fifteen Mormon Short Stories* and his selected stories, *The Canyons of Grace*. I was not disappointed; the stories offer variety and excellence not always found in Mormon literature. These are not happy-ending moral tales, but neither are they stories devoid of eternal values.

An "abundant sampling of experience" (p. x) is what Peterson hopes *Greening Wheat* supplies, and this variety of experience, coupled with Mormon themes, appears at first to be all that ties these fifteen stories together. The nature of God, faith, conversion, repentance, sensuality, chastity, fidelity, freedom, death are all issues dealt with in this collection. With the exception of one mid-westerner, the fifteen writers are from the West; five are women. But this seeming similarity doesn't signal narrowness. Various points of view, even non-Mormon, are explored sensitively.

Dennis Clark's "Answer to Prayer" is the most experimental in form, as he mixes third-person narrative with monologue and dialogue and includes a story, prayer, poetry, and journal entry. The all-seeing, all-knowing narrator is missing from this collection. Although most of the stories are told in the third person, the narrators still display character and directness that evoke the reader's empathy. Most Mormons can identify with Kevin Cassidy's Peter who discovers after working with non-Mormons that he might not have a corner on truth and goodness after all, or with Kent Farnsworth's Brad who tries to escape the designation, "Mormon," in a new school but is finally forced to own his background and accept ridicule, or with the quondam Karen Rosenbaum's Cherry feels, torn between her love for a young man who no longer believes and her desire to maintain her own relationship with the Church amid doubts. We can also appreciate R. A. Christmas's story, "Another Angel," and the discomfort Professor R. L. Robinson might experience after believing that he has successfully rejected his long-ago Mormon conversion only to find his new bride reading the *Book of Mormon* on their honeymoon. Even minor characters ring true; every teacher or Church leader will empathize with the seminary teacher in "Four Walls and An Empty Door" because Linda Sillitoe shows so well how a chance, sometimes ill-considered, remark can change lives.

Although the collection is not without flaws, the hopes that Peterson expresses in the "Introduction" are fulfilled because the stories are skillfully written and will appeal to gentiles as well as Mormons.

Levi Peterson's own story, "The Gift," is clearly the most compelling one in *Greening Wheat*; in fact, its inclusion as the centerpiece causes the collection to seem uneven. But then how can a five-page story compete in depth with one of twenty-six pages such as "The Gift"? However, this story about an especially gifted missionary whose innocence threatens to destroy him reveals one of Peterson's flaws as a writer. He has the jarring habit of using a difficult word when a simpler one would convey his meaning more clearly and be more in character. For example, Gerard, the French narrator in "The Gift," uses the word *conspicuous* twice to describe his lustful sister. Peterson might be justified in thinking that the philosophical Gerard would use *conspicuous* but not that his Utah-born narrator, Arabella, in "The Canyons of Grace" would use the word to describe herself. I question other words in "The Gift" as well—Peterson uses both *chiaroscuro* and *horripilation* on page 103. This weakness as well as the occasional use of inflated sentences mars Peterson's otherwise skillful narrative style. Nonetheless, "The Gift" is an excellent story, and the collection would be worth considerably less without it.

The six stories in *The Canyons of Grace* explore wilderness and wildness, both in nature and in the individual. In a personal essay that appeared in *Sunstone*, he sees himself as a child of the frontier; it is in the wilderness that he searches for his roots:

To grow up in Snowflake meant that I saw myself and those who preceded me underneath a sky or on an open ridge or among the junipers. Even in a house I was never more than a step from wilderness. I cannot divest myself of wilderness because I cannot divest myself of my ancestors. . . . When the wilderness is gone, half my identity will be gone with it. (*Sunstone*, Vol. 4, nos. 5 & 6 (Dec. 1979), p. 72)

This statement provides a commentary on the stories. As a transplanted westerner, I have felt at times that I was only fully alive when I was gazing at the Utah mountains. Therefore I can appreciate Peterson's preoccupation, although for him wilderness seems to seduce in such a way that anything else pales in comparison.

In the "Introduction" to *Greening Wheat*, Peterson asserts that "Mormons live in perpetual ambivalence, pulled between the commandments and an intractable human nature" (p. vii) and that "many of them are susceptible to dissonance; in the secular world or in their own perverse psyche, they find opposition to their faith" (p. viii). These two words—*ambivalence* and *dissonance*—describe the tone of the stories in *The Canyons of Grace*. Peterson's portrayals vary from the farcical to the grotesque, from the fantastic to the naturalistic. But whether behavior is well-meaning, perverse, or insane, whether nature is benevolent, benign, or destructive, there is discord between characters or with nature that creates situations that are never satisfactorily resolved. Peterson provides no comforting closure, no romantic fiction here.

This then is the theme that ties these two volumes together. Every story deals with what could be called the Mormon dilemma—how to subdue the flesh, how to contain the wildness inherent in life without losing vitality and spontaneity. For Peterson there seems to be no sense of relief when the natural man becomes better aligned with the spiritual man, when ambivalence and dissonance are reduced. In his stories there is constant unresolved tension among nature and man and an exacting God. The way Peterson had been taught to define God, however, is too rejecting and demanding to fit with my own experience. Nature may be benevolent, but for Peterson, God never is, and yet, he continues to explore the difference between the grace nature gives and that bestowed by God.

Without ever arriving at a definitive answer, Peterson's explorations achieve a grace of their own. These stories are full of memorable characters and incidents that expose the basic questions

of Mormonism. Add to that the comfort of hearing western place names, some long forgotten, and being encircled by that culture again, and you have ample reason for reading one of the best Mormon writers of today.

Claudia Harris
Decatur, Georgia

• Gidget Goes to Utah •

Sunbonnet Sisters: True Stories of Mormon Women and Frontier Life, by Leonard J. Arrington and Susan Arrington Madsen (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1984), 161 pages. A Bibliographic Note is included, and an index, but numbered footnotes are omitted.

This delightful little book focuses on the youth and girlhood experiences of women who were part of the Mormon movement in the nineteenth century. Their accounts are arranged chronologically, from the foundation of the Church in 1830 in upstate New York until the deaths of some of the women of Utah in the 1950s. These seventeen histories are not excerpts from the diaries and journals of the women but stories about their lives taken from diaries and journals and paraphrased into charming narratives. The major contribution of the book is the sense of each woman's identity that it succeeds in developing for the reader. The reader rises before the morning sun and spins by the fire at night with these girls—who-become-women—and is all the richer for the experience.

The first part deals with the lives of five early Mormon women such as Jane Snyder Richards in New York, Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois in the 1830s and 1840s. Part Two presents the stories of four immigrants such as Susanna Goudin from England and the continent who made their way to Utah after 1847. Part Three examines the settlement of the Intermountain West through the writings of four pioneers like Mary Jane Mount Tanner. The second generation, daughters of the pioneers and immigrants, tell their stories in the fourth part. Women such as Lula Green Richards and Ellis Reynolds Shipp bridged the gap between settlement and establishment. Together, the accounts frame a delightful composite story of the experiences of girls who became women in periods of time beyond our experience.

Sunbonnet Sisters is intended for a Mormon audience who understands references to the United Order, plural marriage, and stakes and wards, because no explanation accompanies these terms. The stories deal with such diverse topics as conversion experiences, outstanding events of the overland crossing, relationships with families, and sorrows at deaths and disruptions. They also reveal in lucid detail the staggering load of physical labor borne by feminine backs.

The introduction to the work is great, but I disagree with the conclusion that much of the work performed by these women was not stereotypical women's work. It was. And those women, such as Ellis Shipp who attained some autonomy in their lives, did so by living apart from their husbands and becoming financially independent. Others who performed some work that was considered men's work did not attain sought-after goals and eventually reverted to quite traditional status and roles.

I was uncomfortable with only two aspects of the book. To a woman, these women are presented as being uncompromisingly faithful to their religious tenets, and difficulties of belief or practice are not mentioned; second, the references to plural marriage are so veiled as to be overlooked, and none of the pressures and rewards of the system are addressed. Individual marriages are always mentioned, but whether the husband had already taken other wives, or whether other women joined the family later is omitted. The stories are told with optimistic enthusiasm—as if plural marriage could have been dealt with as matter-of-factly as cows in the cornfield. Polygamy is judged neither morally right nor wrong but accepted as a realistic part of some of these women's lives.

But the book is good; it's a gem. Give it to your favorite aunts and your nieces. Parts of it will then be frequently incorporated into sacrament meeting talks and thus improve the whole Church.

Valeen T. Avery
Flagstaff, Arizona

Reunion Report

Last year there was some controversy as to whether we could call our October gathering in the New Hampshire woods a reunion. Technically we weren't reconvening, we were only just meeting--many of us for the first time. This year, however, no such problem arose--we were going to a reunion.

Again we wound our way through the highways and byways of Massachusetts and New Hampshire and arrived at the haven of Hillsboro Camp. Again, Harriet and Puffy indulged our wildest culinary fantasies. Again the peaceful woodland setting relaxed and refreshed us. But is this what we had traveled, many of us hundreds of miles, for? I certainly hadn't (though I must admit Puffy's homemade desserts are well worth the trip). I came for the sharing--sharing of thoughts, laughs, or even sorrow.

Friday evening, as we gathered in the dining hall, I remember feeling almost disappointed because this year's meetings couldn't and wouldn't be as wonderful as last year's. However, as each sister and brother rose and introduced themselves, a warmth surrounded me, and I realized that even though many of the faces were different, the same intertwining spirit bound us all--the spirit of our sisterhood. The memories of that feeling, intermingled with the rush of a stimulating intellectual exchange, are still very sweet to me.

I guess the fact that each of our experiences there speaks to a different part of me tells me that sisterhood is not just spiritual or intellectual or emotional or social. It touches each aspect of our beings. To truly be sisters, we must accept and enlarge each other in all areas. As I read *Exponent II*, I feel such love for those who contribute and am so grateful for your influence on my life. To actually be surrounded by these wonderful, giving, loving people was an incredible experience. I was continually amazed at the acceptance and freedom that we all felt and participated in.

On the back page of most *Exponent II* editions, there is a statement of its purpose. As I read it, two points in particular stand out:

1. It is to be a forum for the sharing of ideas and feelings in an atmosphere of acceptance.
2. It is to promote a common bond of commitment to the Church and the women of the Church.

The reunion was for me the embodiment of both of these objectives. The candid discussions, emotions, and spirit of the gathering clearly indicated to me that diversity in thought is compatible with unity in spiritual commitment.

Barbara Taylor
Upton, Massachusetts



The Interview (continued)

one who earned any money to feed and clothe him, and that I'm the only one there twenty-four hours a day to care for his needs and love him. But I gave up my right to an eternal family? If that's the justice your God deals out, I don't want any part of it!

I slowly picked up the recommend my bishop had signed. I had laid it on the edge of President Clark's desk earlier. I squeezed it in my fist now and felt the paper become soft and pliant from the moisture in my palms.

"Look," I said. "It's not that big of a deal. My best girlfriend is just getting married and she asked me to be there. But like I said, she's my best girlfriend, she'll understand." I didn't bother to tell him that my sister and I had planned on taking our boys to Disneyland while we would be in L.A. for the wedding. Nor did I tell him that Mom and I had talked about going to the temple every other Thursday, and then maybe out for lunch. It wouldn't have made any difference.

I looked at President Clark carefully. His gray hair was parted straight down the right side. Each strand of hair was held in place with a generous helping of water. He peered at me over his bifocals. How could I ever hope for this man to understand me, I thought. He has had everything he's ever needed. When he was confused, or lonely, or weak, the Lord gave him faith. Besides, I don't think I would ever be bitter if I had a spouse who was as devoted as his wife undoubtedly was. Next time, I reminded

myself, I should see a nun for religious counseling.

"Linda, I'm just asking you to pray for a forgiving heart."

"Well, if you have to pray for the right thing, at the right time, in the right spirit, and the Lord will do what he likes anyway--why even bother praying?"

"Maybe the Lord has answered your prayers," he said. "He has given you supportive parents. You should thank Him for that. Who knows--it might have been worse if He had done what you asked. Maybe you really didn't need those things."

"But I did need them," I said. "Even if I only thought I needed them, that's still a need. And if God is showing me how much He loves me by giving me such great parents, He must surely hate Luke to give him such a rotten father." Yeah, I thought, God answered my prayers. God said, "Linda, I don't like you anymore, and I'm never going to do anything nice for you again."

"Look, Linda, I really hate to cut this short, but I'm due at sacrament meeting in ten minutes to help bless my grandson. Just pray about it, please. God loves Luke and wants you to be a good mother for him. Come back next week after you've thought about the things I've said, and after you've prayed. You simply won't be happy until you can forgive John and accept the Lord and His ways."

By now President Clark had risen and walked around his desk, holding out his right hand. I quickly placed the moistened recommend into my left hand and shook his hand politely.

"Let's get together next Sunday," he said.

By the time I turned my back and left his office, the tears had come. I wiped each one away quickly with the palm of my hands. At least I didn't cry in front of him, I told myself, at least he didn't see me cry. I tore the recommend Bishop Jensen had signed into twelve tiny pieces and walked toward Mom's car. She had popped in and out of the stake president's office just before my interview and had been waiting all this time for me. I opened the car door crying.

"What's wrong, Linda?" my mom asked.

"Nothing really," I said. "Except that I guess I won't be needing this." I let the torn recommend fall in the gutter beside the car, thinking, that's one thing that can't be salvaged.

"What happened?" Mom asked.

"I'm not sure. I guess I didn't study my catechism enough. I said 'no' when the right answer was 'yes.'"

Laura Hamblin
Provo, Utah

L e t t e r s

Dear Editors,

I have been looking for a pen pal. Does someone have a daughter or a son to write to me? I am Janelle Rich. I live at 25 Lakeview, Stansbury Park, Utah 84074. I enjoy playing the piano, playing softball, swimming, writing letters, reading, singing, playing, reading, school, and reading your newspaper. There are five people in my family. I have one sister and one brother. My grandfather lives with me, too. But I didn't count him in the five. I have lots of friends. Please write soon.

Janelle Rich
Stansbury Park, Utah

Editor's Note: We'd love to hear from other "little sisters."

Dear Editors,

To be honest, the first couple of issues of *Exponent II* that I received just did not impress me--can't quite pinpoint why, but it just did not. I had no intention whatsoever of renewing my subscription when it came due.

However, things have changed.

The past couple of issues relating to women/mothers/grandmothers/mothers day, and so forth, have been so thought-provoking, enjoyable, painful in an empathetic sense--and very compelling to read.

Tenia Holland
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Editors,

Please put me back on your mailing list; your little publication provides me with the stimulus to carry on with the sure knowledge that there are others who have the same feelings as I do.

Vivian Leonard
Salem, Oregon

Dear Editors,

Just wanted to let you know how much I enjoy the *Exponent*.

I am happily married to a terrific man, am expecting our fifth child, and am really very satisfied with and excited about my life. It's just that I'm not a bread-baker, compassionate-server, totally selfless "Molly Mormon"-type woman. Sometimes my testimony seems very ragged. I'm trying to accept who and what I am and sometimes it's easy and sometimes it's really tough. Just knowing there are others like me helps so much.

Kathy Clune
Waterloo, Iowa

Dear Editors,

Please sign me up to subscribe to your marvelous publication.

My husband is very possessive of his daily newspaper. One day I realized that he pays six dollars a month for this self-indulgence! First awareness, then on to growth. Small victories feel good.

Deborah Hunt Sartain
Orem, Utah

Dear Sisters,

Keep up the good work. What a lovely idea to have a forum where the active LDS (Lots of Daily Stress) woman can speak her heart. I wish that I would have had the opportunity to read all of the issues as I don't know what items you have discussed and analyzed and what remains to be aired in the future.

If I could give you a greeting from Montana sisters, it would have to be that we are alive, growing and loving this beautiful area that has been compared to a two-lane highway in a four-lane world.

Thanks again for providing an oasis of peace after a hard day in life.

Judy Wright
Missoula, Montana

Dear Editors,

Please let your staff know that there is one sister out in Kansas who gains more for her testimony from *Exponent II* than any other publication. Time after time I sit down and read an issue and my heart is filled with a sweet spirit for I realize that someone else has felt as I do. I'm so grateful that that sister has the ability to write, the forcefulness to put inner feelings on paper, and mail it. I know much more goes into this publication, and I hope very deeply that you are paid with gifts of the spirit.

Jolene Robinson
Lawrence, Kansas

Dear Sisters,

I suppose if she really cared, she'd have been more careful to sign her name in full more often. But in the three places extant, two handwritten, one printed, where she wrote her second name in full, Eliza R. Snow spelled it Roxey Snow. And I care. Too bad.

Nonetheless, it was a superb issue [Winter 1984], especially the Sorensen-Peterson exchange.

Maureen Ursebach Beecher
Provo, Utah

Dear Editors,

I've given some thought to ordering two subscriptions--one to keep and one to loan out. I read the publication from cover to cover and like to share it with others; however, I like to keep all back issues on file. I guess you could say I'm a true devotee of *Exponent II*.

Ruth C. Rasmussen
Pullman, Washington

Dear Editors,

I subscribe to all of the official and independent periodicals intended for an LDS audience and find *Exponent II* the most consistently lifting and enlightening of all. Thank you.

Douglas R. Bunker
Buffalo, New York

Dear Editors,

I love *Exponent II* because it makes me feel like I matter. Other things do, too, of course, but *Exponent II* helps me realize what a wonderful group of women I am part of. So much of what I read there I not only relate to, I feel I can almost claim. Its arrival is always a delightful surprise, and I only wish it would happen more often.

Julie Paguette
Fort Worth, Texas

Dear Editors,

I look forward to each edition of *Exponent II*. It always seems to arrive when I am feeling most alone in my questioning of the intricacies of the gospel or when I am feeling the pressures of guilt for being a working mother. I am usually content to march to my own drum as I fulfill my roles, but when my own drum-sounds become faint, I am encouraged to know there is a sisterhood of strong women who are faithful, yet unafraid to question and move forward. I grow from that strength.

Anne Campbell Rice
Flagstaff, Arizona

Dear Editors,

Your paper is a delight to my soul-weary person. If I didn't receive the intellectual bonding, I would have left the Church years ago. I appreciate your good work.

Sophia Elton
Raymond, Alberta, Canada

ANNOUNCEMENTS

AND NEWS

Exponent II Receives Award

"The Association of Mormon Letters is honored to present the 1982-1983 Special Achievement Award for Sustained Excellence to the editors of *Exponent II*, on the tenth anniversary of the founding of the journal. In an era in which Latter-day Saint women have been seeking to redefine their relationships with their Church, *Exponent II* has blessed a generation of Mormon women with the opportunity to read and write, from within a framework of faith and the desire to believe, for and about the Latter-day Saint woman. Though the journal has opened its pages to a variety of excellent expression from across the whole gamut of faith, its editors have deftly reminded its readers, through selection and encouragement, of the necessity of sustained commitment to self-improvement centered in gospel principles fostered by the Restoration. *Exponent II* has thus remained an exponent not only of women, and particularly Mormon women, but of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We commend the several editors and their associates not only for keeping the torch lit, but for keeping it brightly fueled and well-passed over a significant decade which has meant so much to the growth of women within the Church and thus to the moral and spiritual refinement of the Church itself."

Regional Retreat Planned

Molly McLeellan Bennion, an *Exponent II* reader and supporter from the beginning, would like to welcome anyone who can come to share a soulful weekend with sensitive, intelligent Mormon women of all ages. This regional retreat will be held in Tyler, Texas, in early spring '85. Please call (713) 627-0158 or write to Molly at 5 West Oakes Drive South, Houston, Texas, 77056.

Sisters Speak continued

Nancy Bailey of Albany, California, has also found a way to celebrate Mother's Day that helps her love being a mother. She describes her recent experience on that day as follows:

This Mother's Day I did not wake up early to wake up children who were unhappy to greet the day. I did not force them all—including five-year-old Nate who states repeatedly every Sunday morning, "I'm not taking a bath because I don't want to go to church—I hate church!"—to take a bath. I did not battle fourteen-year-old Matt to wear a belt, or a tie, or a dress shirt, or whatever other item he had settled on not wearing to get my goat. I did not cut nine-year-old Marc's breakfast short and listen to his starving victim's tears because we had to leave immediately to avoid being late. I did not pull forgetful Ann out of the Sunday comics and remind her to brush her hair and teeth. And, I did not sit and fume during talks of Mother's blessed role and squirm as flowers were passed first to "real mothers" and then to future mothers and mothering friends and teachers. There was no hushing and quieting of restless children on hard benches. And, there was no frustration after meetings were over and efforts to steal a few minutes of visiting with friends were incessantly interrupted by children pulling me out the door to go home. And, there was no dinner to prepare, no table to set or dishes to wash, no phones and doors to answer. No, there was none of the usual Sunday routine this year on my "Perfect Mother's Day."

This year our family spent the weekend anchored in a beautiful cove in San Francisco Bay in our sailboat. Everyone met their own needs on my day—including me!

Perhaps celebrating Mother's Day works best when one celebrates it spontaneously, when moved upon by special moments in one's mothering experiences. Virginia Allred of Provo, Utah, says it so well in her expression here:

Mother's Day is any day that I feel a spontaneous bonding between me and my children.

It is Mother's Day when I see my children doing the best that they are able.

It is Mother's Day when I see them caring and serving, not as I have told them but as I might have shown them.

It is Mother's Day when I enjoy our likenesses but can make allowances for our differences.

It is Mother's Day when I see them include God in their plans.

It is Mother's Day when we express our love honestly.

but . . .

Love me, not at all, when by decree, all the world "loves mothers."

If Freud had asked Carol E. Wolf of Los Alamos, New Mexico, "What do women want . . . on Mother's Day, she might well have answered what she writes here:

Spare me the gushy details of all perfect actions and attributes rolled into one mother. Don't praise me for my little girls' handsome dresses—I hate to sew. Don't pat me on the back for the delicious dinner waiting at home—I hate to cook. Don't polish my halo, earned with my unending patience—I've failed badly there. Don't applaud me for unselfish decisions—I'm employed outside the home. Don't talk to me of children by the dozen—I practice birth control (and practice and practice). Don't show me my sisters' successes—I've guilt enough to overcome. Don't compare me to the mothers of Mormonism—I can't fit their mold. Don't equate clean windows with the celestial kingdom—I'll never make it if you do.

Tell me how I fit into the overall plan. Tell me about women in the scriptures. Tell me that order is a law of heaven and not a household skill. Tell me of the eternal scheme. Share the experience of blessing others—let me feel the heat of power down my arms to fill my hands. Let me live up to my potential—grant free agency to me. Show me a perfect model to emulate—give me back my Heavenly Mother. Let me worship at her footstool on Mother's Day.

The general topic of our next issue is marriage, and we thought that it would be interesting to explore the problems caused by corporate or career moves that mean moving to a different part of the country or the world. What have the effects on constant relocation been on your family, particularly your sisters? Do you subscribe to the "whither thou goest" philosophy? Does being a Mormon soften the blow of such moves because the "Church is the same everywhere you go"? What are the effects on a two-career marriage? Who gives up what? What alternatives or creative solutions have been tried, for example, commuter marriages?

Please send your typed, double-spaced responses to us by February 1, 1985.

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